

LAW OF INERTIA

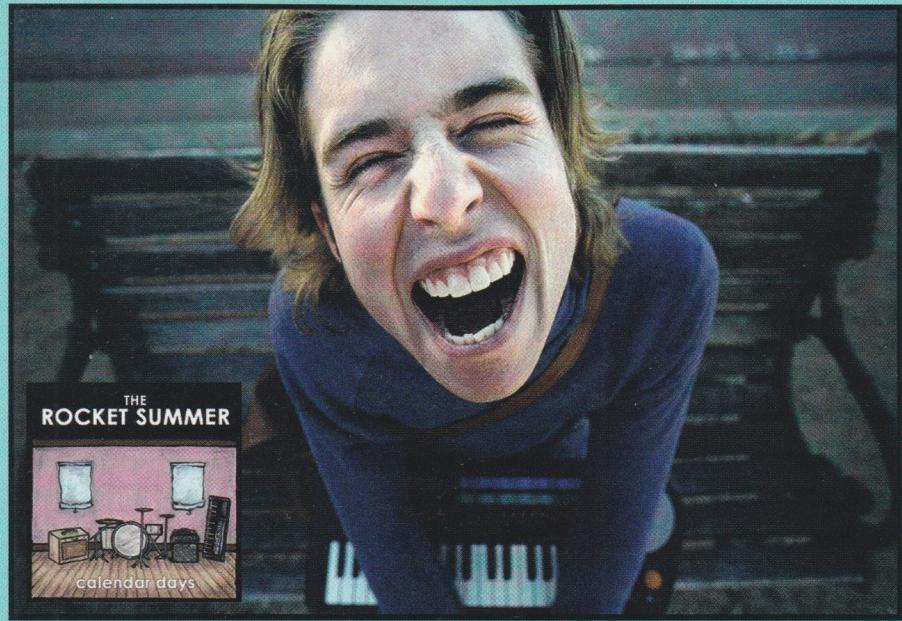


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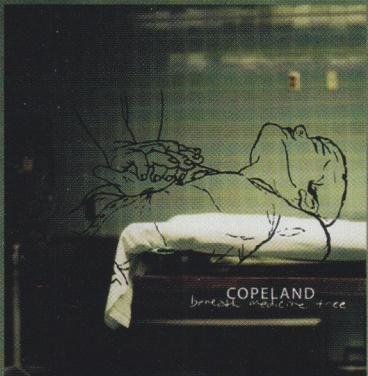
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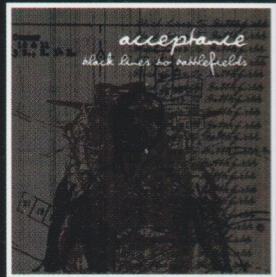


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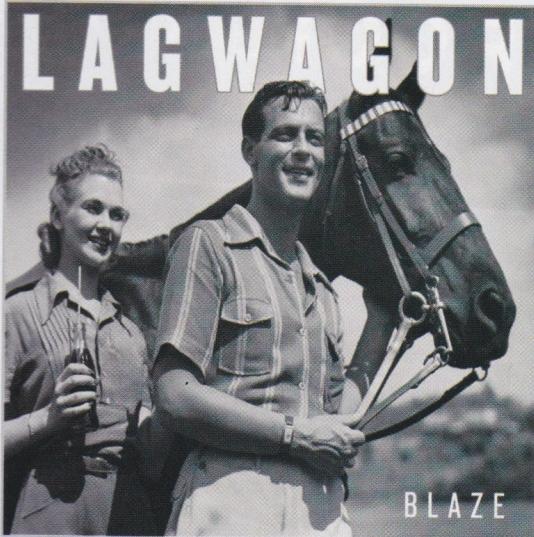


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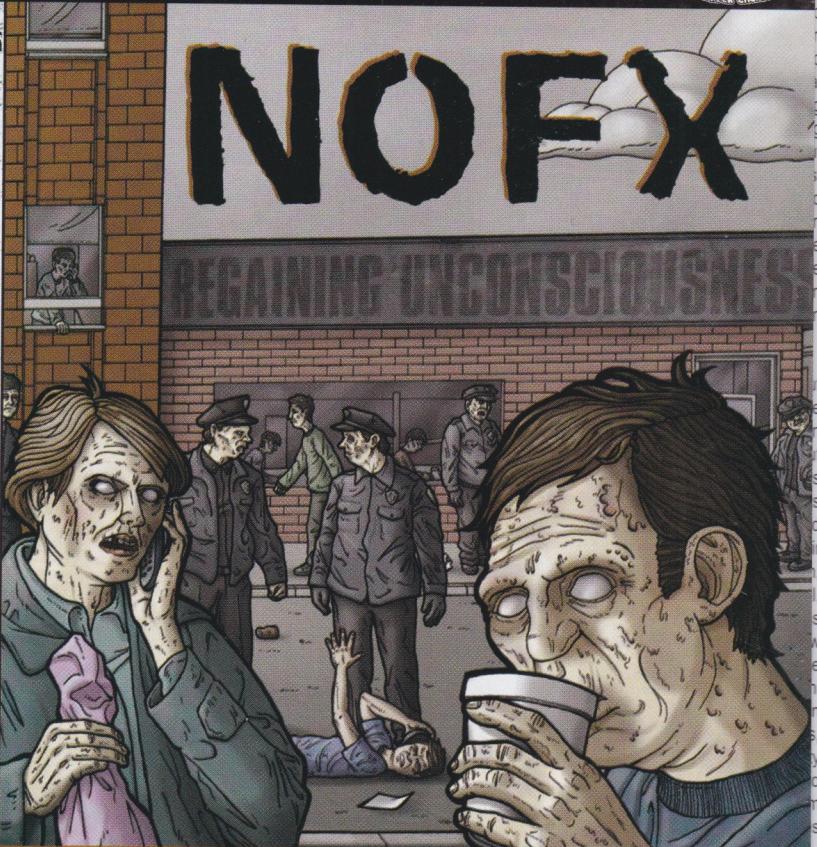
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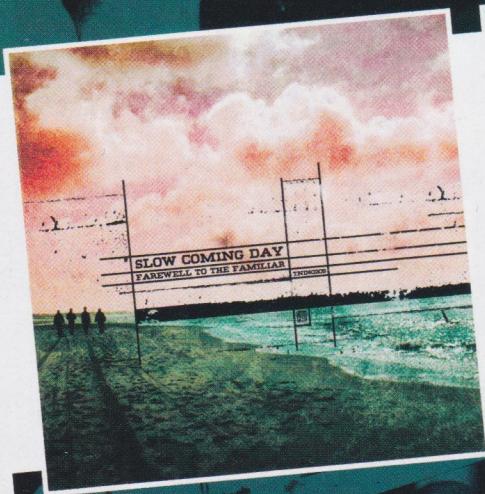
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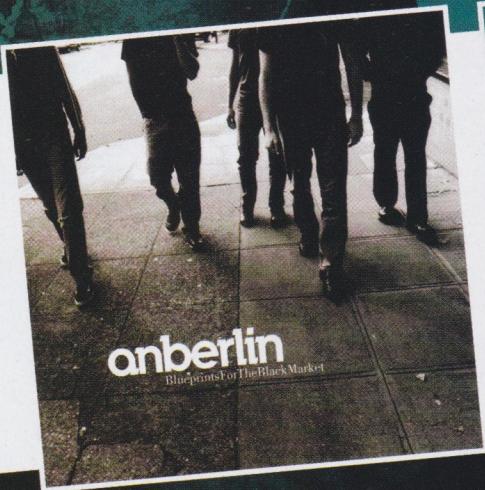
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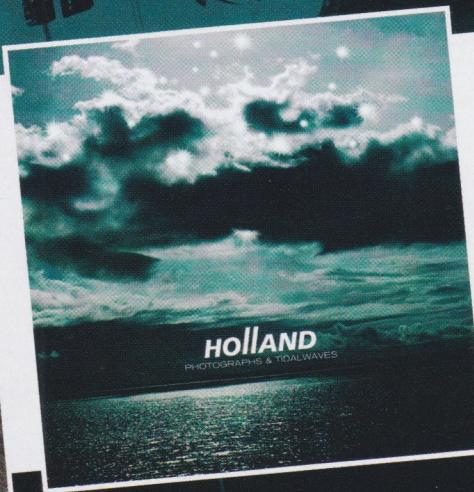
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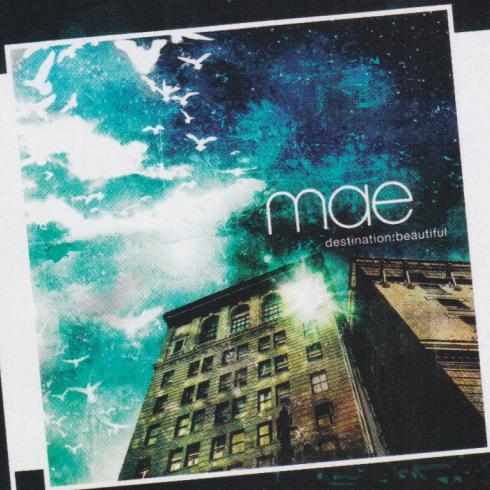
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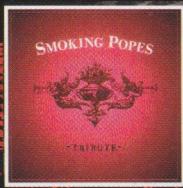
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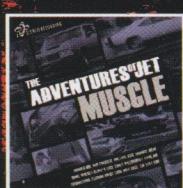
Smoking Popes
"The Party's Over" CD
Double Zero Avail. 3/25

The final studio recording from this legendary band. Features covers of Patsy Cline, Willie Grade, Duvall, Mike Felumlee, Death on Wednesday, more!



Smoking Popes Tribute
Various Artists
Double Zero Avail. 3/25

A Tribute to the Smoking Popes w/ Bad Astronaut, the Ataris, Grade, Duvall, Mike Felumlee, Death on Wednesday, more!



Adventures of Jet Muscle CD
Suburban Home Avail. 3/25

The Best Fuckin' Pop Album of 2003! The Cars meets The Beach Boys meets Weezer. This is the record you've been waiting for!



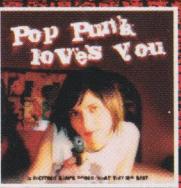
Stereotyperider
"Same Chords..." CD
Suburban Home Out Now!

"The guitars ring out and bleed, blurring the edges of the songs. The rhythm section seems bent on revolution." - MRR



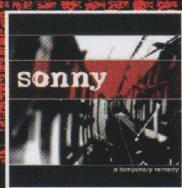
The Goodwill
"That Was A Moment" CD
Negative Progression Out Now!

From Long Island, the Goodwill play incredibly tight, powerful, and emotionally well developed songs.



Pop Punk Loves You
Various Artists
Wynona Records Out Now!

Comp featuring Rufio, Lawrence Arms, Midtown, Rise Against, Strung Out, Gamits, Over It, Counterfit, Stereotyperider, more!



Sonny
"A Temporary Remedy" CD
Fast Music Out Now!

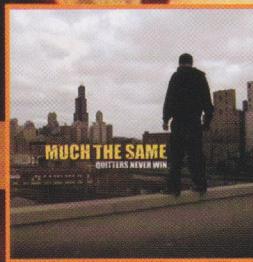
Sonny combines pop sensibilities with sincere lyrics and intense guitar driven melodies to create a unique blend of eno,pop,punk!



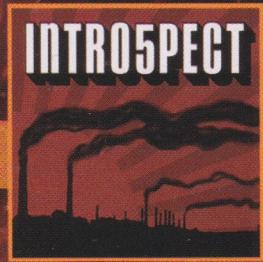
Premonitions of War
"The True Face of Panic" CD
GoodFellow Out Now!

Drawing comparisons to bands as varied as Coalesce, Neurosis, and Pig Destroyer, they combine elements of all forms of extreme music.

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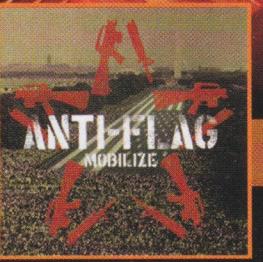
Intro5pect
Self Titled
AF0022 CD



Endless Struggle
Till The End
AF0021 CD



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AF0017 CD



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Mobilize
AF0014 CD

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Joan of Arc **So Much Staying Alive and Lovelessness**

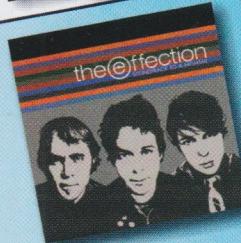
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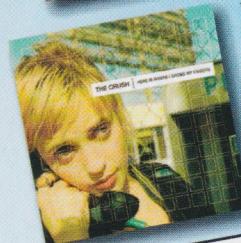
"Some of the Young"
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Law of Inertia

Spring 2003

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Unfortunately the cards are stacked against us. I've realized this recently: power and connections are the surest route to success. Having friends in the right places, having money to work with, and the ability to hire experienced professionals to run your venture are essential aspects of a successful business. It's unfair but it's true. The person whose father happens to run *Rolling Stone* is more likely to get his band on MTV than the guy whose brother is a bartender at the local club. The saddest part, as I'm concerned, is that nowhere is this true more than in the music industry and its various offshoots, like music magazines. Think about it: Gene Simmons' lame-ass rag, *Tongue*, is far more likely to succeed than an exciting underground mag like *Law of Inertia* because I never played at Madison Square Garden.

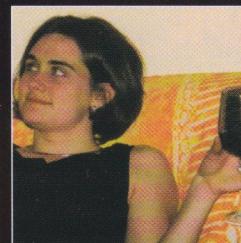
The problem is, the staff of *Law of Inertia* has no money. It's ramen and warm beer for us every night. We don't have friends in the right places, we don't have wonderful resumes such that we could all go get better-paying gigs at other magazines, hell, we don't even know how to run a magazine—we totally wing this thing from issue to issue. So if you like what you see in front of you, our 13th issue (which also celebrates five years of our existence, if you're counting), then you're witnessing a few kids having a good time trying to live their dreams and make something cool in the process. And you know what, I think this issue is going to be awesome once it gets transferred from my computer screen to a little paper book.

Seriously, I'm so proud of this magazine. Recently a gentleman from a significant band that makes the rounds on MTV on a daily basis called me to say that *Law of Inertia* was the only magazine that had the courage to call their newest release for what it truly was (sub-par) while all other music magazines kissed their asses simply because chicks automatically want to do you if they see you in this band's T-shirt. When this musician told me how much he respected our work and the things *Law of Inertia* has to say about the state of contemporary music, I was thrilled. Partly because it's always nice to hear how great your work is from someone who has been on the cover of 20 magazines in one month, but more importantly because I realized that *Law of Inertia* is for the people that do not have the access to be huge rock stars simply because their daddies have a lot of money. Instead, *Law of Inertia* is a magazine for those that are fed up with the state of culture these days and wants something that can only come from the heart, not the pocketbook.

The people that read this magazine are musicians and artists and skaters and punks and dweebs, dorks, and nerds. We're the people who aren't content to sit there and watch television all day. Nope, we're the people who work our asses off to get our projects noticed, and then we pour our emotion and effort into them when they finally do get some recognition. I hate to say it to the big record labels, magazines, and other dubious music-related would-be corporate hedgeronists out there, but you can't buy what we do here. Does this sound like you? If so, it's a tough road ahead but you're not alone. I guarantee it.

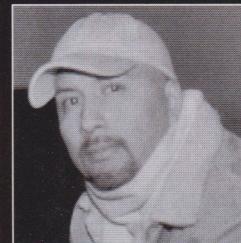
Fighting the good fight one fucking day at a time,
Ross A. Siegel

CONTRIBUTORS



Rebecca Swanner: Contributing Writer

Rebecca is a recent import to New York City, hailing from Boston College with a degree in communications. Before that, she lived in Detroit (yes, she watches hockey constantly). She claims she knew nothing of Eminem when he was an underground rapper, but we don't believe her. She's way too hip for that. Ms. Swanner also researches for *Stuff Magazine* and wants to start her own magazine in the near future.



Eddie Ugarte: Contributing Writer

Eddie is an uptown denizen and an actual New Yorker, born and raised. When he's not writing and editing his awesome magazine, *Ghetto Blaster*, he's hanging with his dog. We think he looks hot in the self-portrait. What do you think?



Ghazal Sheei: Contributing Writer

Ghazal is not a native of Orange County (thankfully), but currently resides there and attends UC Irvine. She also manages to hold down a job at a well known hardcore label doing work she refers to as "fun." One day, she would very much like to move out east. She looks damn good in a down parka.



Noel Shankel: Staff Writer

A self-proclaimed "Professional Gentleman of Leisure," Dr. Noel Shankel feels he reached the pinnacle of his social standing in the 5th grade. He has since devoted much of his time to whiffle ball, excessive napping, and burrito eating competitions.



Aaron Lefkove: Reviews Editor

Having ruled the Dirty South for the better part of the 1990's, Mr. Lefkove comes to us from Atlanta, which he likes to call "the ATL." You would never guess this Jewish kid—who happens to love Skrewdriver and also plays a mean guitar solo in his bands The Monk Eastmans and Heart Disease—actually grew up right down the street from the ministry of Creflo and Taffi Dollar. Believe it.



Susan Leem: Contributing Writer

Ms. Leem became News Director at the gem of the Minneapolis AM dial, 770 Radio K (Radiok.org) for the express purpose of jamming corporate media and getting comps to shows. She writes about Low in this issue because she's had just about enough of the jamming. I mean, how much jamming can one take?



Stan Horaczek: Staff Reviewer / Photographer

Stan is the only member of the *Law of Inertia* staff who calls himself straight-edge. Needless to say he is loads of fun to bring to parties. When not writing or taking pictures for our magazine, Stan follows Shai Hulud around the country like a deadhead and sometimes goes to school at NYU when his Diet-Coke buzz isn't too strong. He says hardcore turns him on... we are only half sure he's talking about the music.

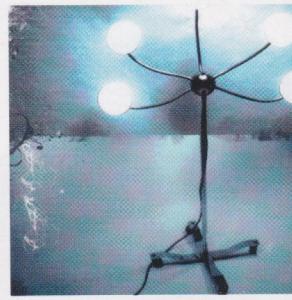


Friendly Fire

Initiative

Blackout CD

Great modern HC from this Brooklyn NYC band. Straight up Ignite style HC, with a strong metal influence. Produced by Carl Porcaro (Killing Time, Electric Frankenstein).

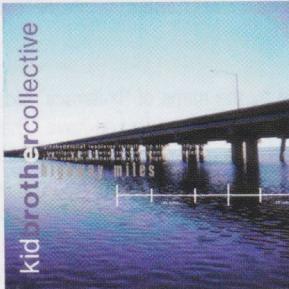


Race For Titles

s/t

Redemption CD

"Sensitive, lilting indie rock that isn't afraid to rock out...A gem of originality... The album's emotional peaks and valleys will leave you breathless." -Alternative Press

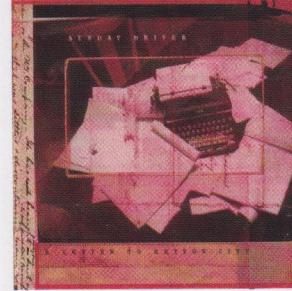


Kid Brother Collective

Highway Miles

One Day Savior CD

After a self released full length, split 7" with Camber, and a three song ep, Michigan's Kid Brother finally find their home. Dreary and depressive indie rock comparable to bands like Camber, Rival Schools, and Mineral.

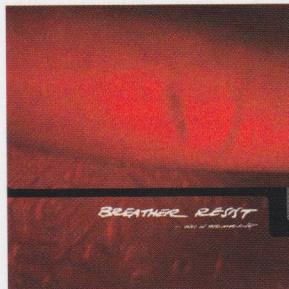


Sunday Driver

A Letter To Bryson City

Doghouse Records CD

The debut album from Miami's Sunday Driver. *A Letter To Bryson City* takes the listener on a long stroll through intricate guitar, swirling strings, and precision drumming. *A Letter To Bryson City* rolls as much as it is rock.



Breather Resist

Only In The Morning

Deathwish MCD

A true juggernaut in comparison to their contemporaries, BREATHER RESIST are what all volatile and heavy music wishes it could be. Unpredictable, menacing, and utterly unique in both musical dynamic and defining personality.

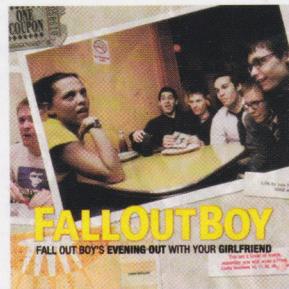


Pelican

Untitled

Hydra Head CD

This instrumental quartet elicits monumental tones from the same fertile grounds that gave birth to Earth, Isis, Mogwai and Godflesh, subduing the listener with subtle variations on repetition and an unexpected sense of melody.

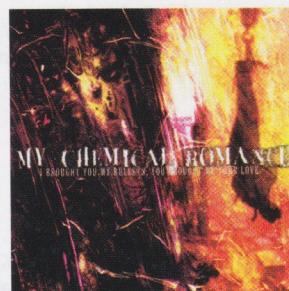


Fall Out Boy

Evening Out With Your Girlfriend

Uprising CD

A pristine pop punk platter complete with the invigorating punch of New Found Glory, the melodic sensitivities of Saves the Day and the smart arrangements of Blink 182 combined.



My Chemical Romance

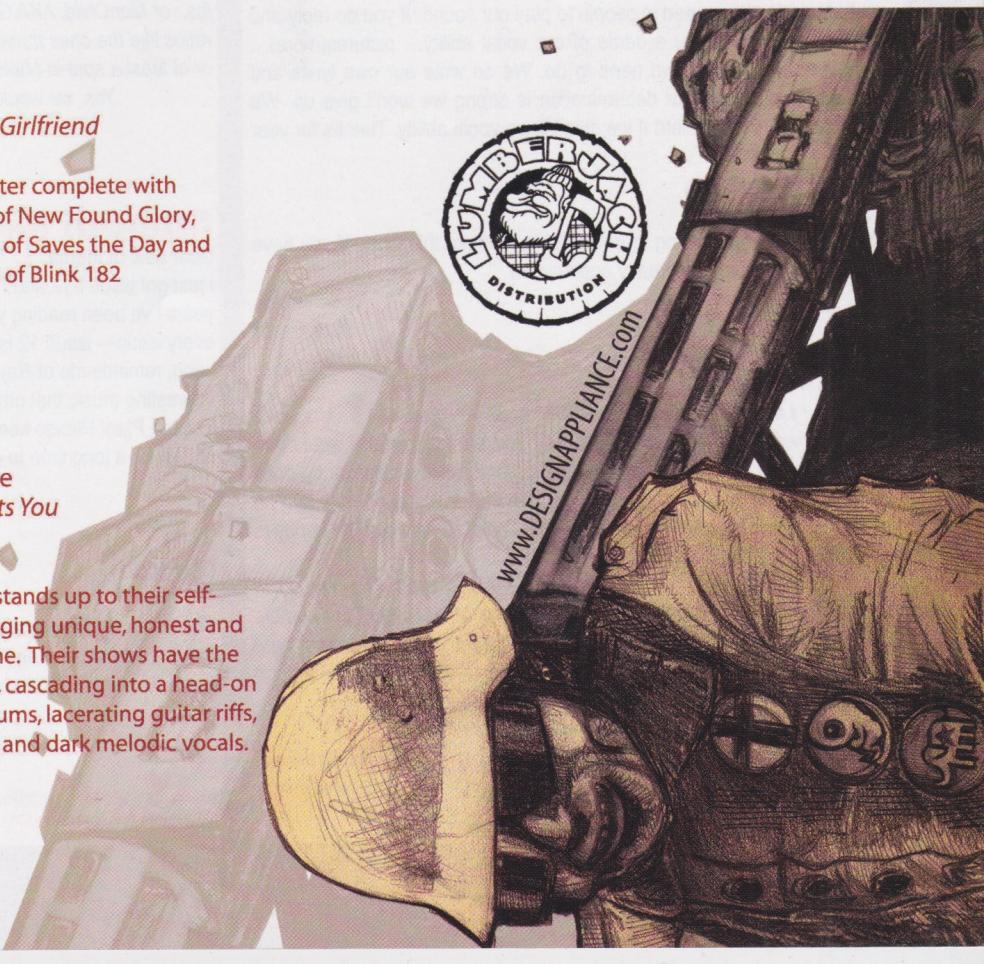
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Letters



Punk Preps

To Who It May Concern:

Let us introduce ourselves, our names are Lisa Ruiz and Alyssa Robbins. As you can see in the return address we are the "Punk Preps" We have a lot of Ideas and just want to be heard out. We're sure we have a brand new sound. We're a mix between punk rock and our own touch of pop. We're not your stereo-typical "Pop Princess." We lay it on the line and aren't afraid to take chances. We realize that you get a lot of these types of things but we really think that we can bring out a new image and inspire lots of people to be who they are, not who the media or any other influence say they should be. Just think, you could be the one to find a great new sound and instead of the common punk-pop (guy) group, its girls proving that we can do anything they can. We can be just as great. We're ourselves, and we don't try to be anything we aren't. Please reply to this and tell us what you think of our idea. If you're willing to help us get this off the ground. We need you to help us get musicians to get "Punk-Preps" together and make a "dent" in the music world... introduce something out of the ordinary. We are the vocals all we need is people to play our sound. If you do reply and wish for us to send you a demo of our vocal ability... pictures(more)... whatever... Tell us what we need to do. We do write our own lyrics and can send you some. Our determination is strong we won't give up. We would[n't] be trying so hard if we didn't have vocal ability. Thanks for your time.

Contact Alyssa Robbins

P.S. 937-547-***

We are willing and wanting to do anything to make this work. If you have any ideas they would be greatly appreciated

As ourselves,
Punk-Preps

Dear Punk-Preps,

Law of Inertia's inquisitive creative director, a Mr. Jake Futernick, wants to know: when you say you are "willing and wanting to do anything" to get your project off the ground, well, what exactly does that mean? Jake is genuinely curious as he truly loves punk rock and he fantasizes about Mandy Moore on a nightly basis, so he would be happy to be your, uh, mentor if need be.

Moreover, Law of Inertia has a mascot, a Mr. Tim "No Holds Barred" Holden. Mr. Holden wishes to make the readership of our humble magazine aware that he thinks the editors of Law of Inertia "are in the right business," and he yearns for the kind of teenage fetishism we deal with on a daily basis here at Law of Inertia corporate headquarters.

And yes, please send a demo immediately.

As ourselves,
Law of Inertia

III-iteracy

Dear Law of Inertia,

I manage a Hip hop/R&B group from Virginia. They go by the name of "III-iteracy" Most people have heard of them... if you haven't... shame on you... and now you have. They produce, write, and perform all their own music... I want you to give them a look & a listen at III-it.com . If you like it and want to work together I can set up an interview... or anything that you would like to do... since I'm trying to get these guys exposure! Contact me back as soon as you can.

Sincerely,
Scott

Dear Scott and III-iteracy,

Thanks so much for contacting us! We checked out your website and, my... are we impressed. III-iteracy really does write, produce, and perform all their own music—and lest I forget that factoid, it was written all over the site. You guys really are the real deal. We were especially interested to learn that, according to your Bio page, the members of III-iteracy are "Playaz not Gangstaz." Good to know, we totally would have mistaken you for Gangstaz had you not forewarned us of your Playa status. Just so we're clear, a Playa is someone who "fucks a lot" like Big Pun (RIP) or Biggie (RIP), while a gangsta is someone who at one point in their life sold crack for a living and gangbang, like Biggie (RIP) or Eazy-E (RIP)... wait, we're getting confused.

Lastly, I loved the part of your site where you give brief tidbits of information about all the members of III-iteracy, like Ah-men, AKA Kirk Dudley, weighing in at 190 lbs.; or ManChild, AKA George Trent, weighing in at 185. With height to body-weight ratios like the ones those you're a shoe-in for most physically-toned rappers of the year... or at least a spot in Muscle and Fitness Magazine!

Yes, we would love to interview you. How does a cover story sound to you?

Sincerely,
Law of Inertia

Smooth Move

Dear Law of Inertia,

I just got issue #12 and I must say you guys and girls have come a long way in the three years I've been reading your magazine. The magazine gets better and better looking every issue—issue 12 is as interesting looking as any other music magazine I've ever seen, reminds me of *Raygun* from 10 years ago—and the writing is great too. You cover interesting music that other magazines won't touch... from Har Mar Superstar to Dillinger Escape Plan! Please keep up the good work. Your magazine is awesome and I will be a reader for a long time to come!

Sincerely,
Mickey Burnbaum

Dear Mickey,

Thanks so much for the kind words. We were hoping people would respond favorably to our (rocky) transition to the magazine format from a zine platform, and in your case it looks like we have done all right. Glad to have you as a reader!

Sincerely,
Law of Inertia

Please direct all letters to info@lawofinertia.com. Note: all letters, e-mails, or telegrams sent to Law of Inertia become property of Law of Inertia and can and will be used against you in a court of law.

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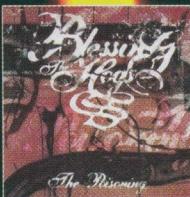
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B.W. GRADSKY INTERNET DAD PRESENTS:

ASK B.W.

"Advice you can depend on from the world's biggest asshole."

Dear B.W.,

After hearing rumors of another internet dad and doing some extensive internet research, I think I have found someone who has been through a similar predicament that I now face... you!

As the new millennium approached, I made a New Year's resolution to go on a blind date set up through the internet. The date went so well it concluded with us humping on a friend's couch. After that, I did not speak to my internet date for some time. In jest, I wrote a mocking e-mail to her asking if she was pregnant and simply trying to hide this fact from me. She responded that she was in fact pregnant. Having worn an industrial-strength condom, I demanded a paternity test. Much to my delight, I was not the father. She was just a whore

I soon discovered through a bout of passionate e-mails that the real father was M.I.A. After seeing too many internet babies grow up to become juvenile delinquents, I felt the need to step in.

Recently, after many years as a swinging bachelor, I have somehow stumbled into a committed, monogamous relationship with a new girl. This is where my problems begin.

My girlfriend is jealous of my internet family, especially my close relationship with the internet mom. My gut instinct tells me I should arrange a meeting between the two to help alleviate any tensions brewing. Having been in a similar situation, what do you, B.W. Gradsky, Internet Dad, think I should do?

Technology Blows,
Philadelphia, PA

Dear Technology Blows,

Yes, you have found me. I, too, am an internet dad. I dare not go into the specifics of how my internet baby came to be at this time, but I'm still here for you, so you must trust my wisdom.

First of all, your gut instincts could not be more wrong. Any meetings between your current girlfriend and the internet mom could cause a rift in the space-time continuum and the results could be disastrous. So, as I see it, you have three options.

Your first option is to hire an actress to play internet mom. Your current girlfriend knows you have already bonded internet mom and probably worries that maybe someday you will leave her for your internet family. This means you must take special care in hiring the right actress to play internet mom. It should be a

woman who perhaps once was attractive, but, "ever since the baby, hasn't been able to shed the extra pounds." Somewhere in the range of 250 to 300 pounds should suffice. Have her show up alone and claim the baby is at a relative's house, then allow her to slyly fill your girl in on all the details of how you two were never really that close, and how you could never compare to her own current boyfriend that spends way more time with the kid than you ever did. After this, your girl's jealousy should be taken care of.

Your second option is to fake the tragic death of internet mom. Perhaps you could arrange a friend to call your cell phone while you and your girlfriend are waiting to meet internet mom. Look concerned, yell a series of "No! No! Nooooo!" and then break down in tears. The words, "There's been an accident" followed by a made up story about internet mom's car wreck on the way to meet you, and your problem is solved. Outta sight, outta mind.

Your final option, should you choose to accept it, is to "go for the gold," as I often put it. No matter what the circumstances, if there are three people involved in some sort of problem, and two of them are chicks, then a nice threesome should set things right.

Like I said before, since your current girlfriend and internet mom cannot meet, you should once again hire an actress (or maybe just a prostitute), to come over, start getting "randy," make out with your girlfriend, and then instruct you to get in on the mix. Good luck and Godspeed.

>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

Dear B.W.,

Dire times are upon me. Last summer I moved to Los Angeles with hopes of becoming a stand-up comedian. Things did not go well. After six months of couch surfing I found myself homeless, unemployed, and sleeping in my car. My only option for shelter, besides the car, is to stay with my ex-girlfriend back in San Francisco. Everyone who has met her has told me that she looks like "a fat butch dyke," if not just a man. While she has told me I can live rent-free, she has also told me if I wanted to move back in, I would have to "earn my keep" in the bedroom. The thought of this, plus her hairy chest, nauseates me. Do I suck it up, move back in with her and "earn my keep," or remain homeless in the comfort of me car and pray to some day become employable?



No One's Laughing
Van Nuys, CA

Dear No One's Laughing,

Say, have you ever thought about some other way of "earning you keep", or do you consider putting out for your hairy-chested fat butch dyke of an ex-girlfriend your only way to find shelter besides getting paid for how hilarious you are? Plenty of people try to become stand-up comedians, most haven't been "in the shit" or pulled their head out of their asses enough to be funny, and few of them are actually funny. So, suck it up, plow that hairy ass into rent-free paradise and maybe one day you'll write me again and tell me where I can see your new comedy routine on being forced to let Sasquatch play with your private parts.

>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

Dear B.W.,

Maybe you can help. My girlfriend of over a year now has officially become public enemy number one to all of my friends. They claim she is always screaming at me in public and causing a scene, which is true, and they wonder why I have any interest in her at all. They continuously mock her to her face and pray for the day when we will break up. They hate her and told me if I'm with her any longer, then we can also no longer be friends. Last week, in a drunken rage, she totaled my car

I try to explain to them how our special our time is when we hang out one on one. They just call me a pussy. Lately, I've been crying myself to sleep. What should I do?

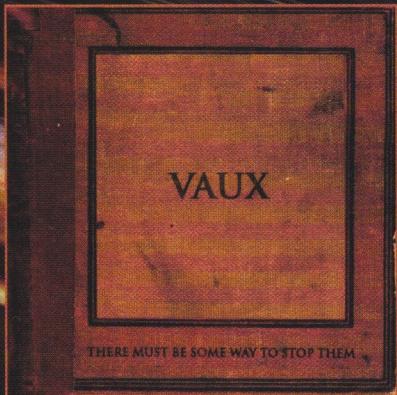
Pussy Whipped
Akron, OH

Dear Pussy Whipped,

I have your balls. Send a check for \$250 to (61 E. 8th St. #125 New York, NY 10003 attn: B.W. Gradsky) and I will tell you where they are.

B.W. encourages you to not only write in with your own problems, but sum up the situations of your friends. You may find yourself able to be more blunt, honest, and to the point when writing about the problems of others, something B.W. Gradsky, Internet Dad, greatly appreciates when he needs to dispense his valuable advice. E-mail B.W. at askbw@lawofinertia.com.

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The White Stripes

I do not believe anybody whose band has opened for the Rolling Stones would not be an avid record collector. It's simply bullshit. So, when Jack White of The White Stripes tells a room full of music journalists that he barely has any records, I just have to say one thing: bullshit. Plus, anyone who claims to not be a record collector—thus implying that his creative genius willed the style in which he plays into being—and then quotes Lead Belly, the famous blues man, is trying to put one over on us, the unsuspecting.

With that said, the recent press conference for The White Stripes, er... White Stripes at the Elephant Bar and Grill in New York City, was filled with self-indulgent music journalism that all but fueled Jack and Meg White's snow-balling egos. To be fair, one would never quite know if Meg's ego is as formidable as her male counterpart, as she said a mere three words throughout the conference.

Journalists from around the nation were each given a chance to ask these two pasty Detroit hipsters two questions a piece. Their answers, or should I say, Jack's answers, were lofty, foisting platitude upon platitude on the audience about subjects like Billy Childish, how hip-hop presents a terrible example to set for America's youth (and by implication, how The White Stripes are wholesome in comparison), and how The Hives, Strokes, and other "The" bands fit into the picture. Jack and Meg looked white hot as they smoked cigarette after cigarette and drank whiskey... at only 4 pm.

Your crack team of journalists at *Law of Inertia*, led by yours truly, infiltrated a who's who of the music press world to ask the three questions that have been burning the left frontal lobe of everyone's mind since "Fell In Love With A Girl" and its Zack the Lego Maniac video first appeared on the pop culture horizon a little over a year ago.

Question #1: White Stripes, promotional copies of your forthcoming album,

***Elephant*, have been fetching upwards of three bills on Ebay recently. How do you think that will affect album sales?**

He-Stripe: I'm not sure of the exact arrangement but around 95% of that is going into my own pocket. [pauses for laughter] I find it sad that some 12 year old kid can determine how our album gets released to the public. I want to be the one who determines that.

She-Stripe:

Question #2: In every single picture I've ever seen of you, you wear the same three colors: black, white, and red. What happens if you wake up in the morning and desire blue-polka dots for your attire?

He-Stripe: Our band is all about threes—vocals, guitar, drums; rhythm, melody, story-telling; black, white, red. [pause as everyone notices Jack's faux-British accent.]

She-Stripe:

Question #3: Which band did you try to emulate when planning your press conference, N'Sync or The Rolling Stones?

He-Stripe: Are those our only choices? Well, then I'd have to go with The Stones.
She-Stripe:

At this point, Jack launched into a story about the time his band opened for London's finest and how much they loved his band. He-Stripe: "Keith told us this hilarious story about the time the time The Stones appeared on Ed Sullivan and asked, 'do we go on before or after the elephants?'" If the \$350 my recent promo of The White Stripes' new record got on Ebay is any indication, The Stripes will be headlining over the elephants. Meg White had this say: "..." □

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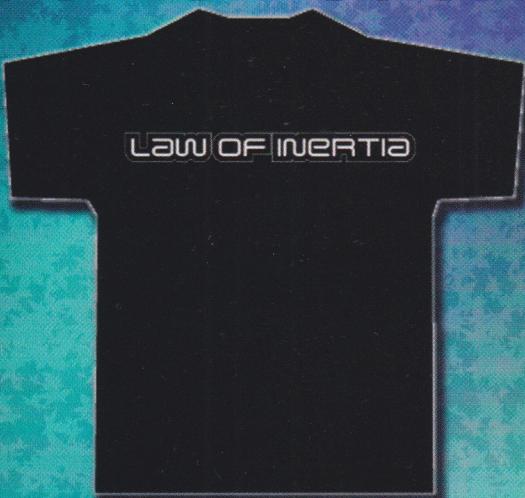
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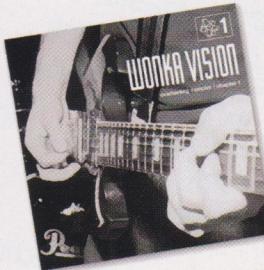
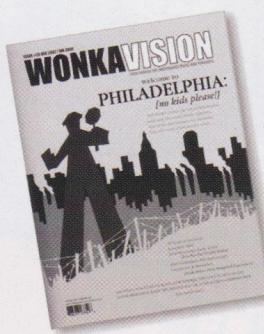
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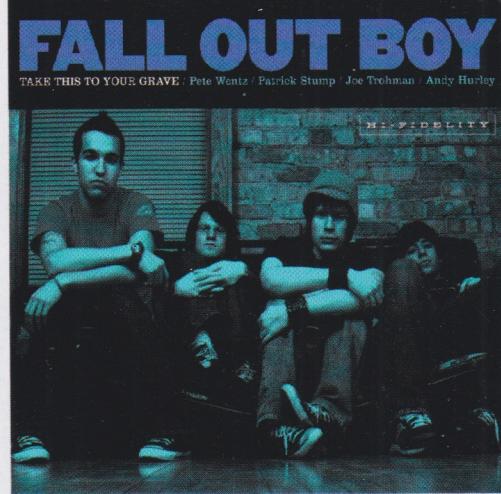
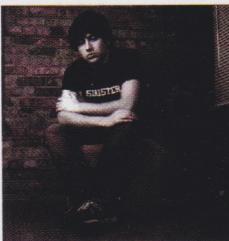
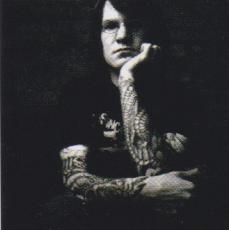
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THE CRUSH



Over the past few years, Minneapolis has been gaining ground in the eternal contest for best punk scene in America. Sure, any city that birthed the legendary '80s acts, Husker Dü and The Replacements, would be on the map for eternity, but lately Minneapolis has been making waves with a new breed of pop bands. Most notably, Dillinger 4, Cadillac Blindsight, The Selby Tigers, Lifter Puller, and now... The Crush.

The Crush play mid-tempo, heartfelt anthems using lost love and heartbreak as the fodder for beautifully sentimental music in the vein of Jawbreaker or Green Day. The band, composed of Jason Cook (drums), Jason Miller (guitar /vocals), Jon Ness (bass), Andy Richardson (guitar/vocals), originally formed after Andy and Jon's tenure in local hardcore band, The Book of the Dead, broke up leaving them with no outlet for their creative energy. Both Jasons entered into the equation after the four met through mutual friends. The band began practicing and soon released a full length for the Minneapolis label, Blood of the Young, in winter of 2000. Although a very strong first effort, Jason Cook, "views it as more of a rough draft" of what the

band has since become. At the time we were still getting to know one another as far as people and musicians go... don't get me wrong I am very proud of it, it definitely helped us get our foot in the door."

And help them get in the door it did. The record made its way to Billie Joe Armstrong of MTV superstar trio, Green Day, through Paddy of Dillinger 4. The Crush signed to Armstrong's Adeline Records and even followed Green Day to England where they opened up two shows at Wembley Stadium. Cook says: "That in itself is so much, but we would love to do more if they offered, and who wouldn't. It's pretty awesome to have a band that you grew up on tell you that they like what you're doing and invite you to play shows with them. It's definitely off the hook."

Some people have criticized the band for appropriating the sound of fellow Minneapolis residents Dillinger 4 and Cadillac Blindsight a bit too much, but the band remains unphased by the comparisons. Once you hear The Crush you'll see that they do not steal from anyone. Instead, they lovingly borrow from their influences—which includes everyone from The Replacements to Jawbreaker

to Bryan Adams—and churn out some of the most lush, romantic pop-punk in the nation.

Recently, the band released *Here Is Where I Cross My Fingers*, on Adeline to rave reviews. The record is full of crude hooks that draw you in, caress the hairs on your neck, and leave you begging for more. Play the opening verses to "Dresser Drawer" and you will wish you had someone in your arms to play the song for. Right now the band is off tour and is planning on writing another record before going to Japan. The Crush are now writing songs for a split EP with a Japanese band called Link. In the near future, the band plans on hitting Europe and then recording a new full length for Adeline. Although the band currently toils in day jobs that suck away their rock star potential, we are sure that big things should be expected from The Crush. "As far as future plans go, I think we all just want to have a good time and see how far this all takes us. It would also be very nice if it was our only job we had to worry about. Right now we're a cook, a waiter, a house painter, and a telemarketer for the Auto Trader," adds Ness. "Very exciting, I know." ■



ONEIDA

Depending on whom you ask, what began as simply a collective of musicians creating experimental rock soon became a grandiose experiment in psychedelic excursions. Oneida released their first album *A Place Called El Shaddai's* back in 1997 on the now defunct Turnbuckle Records. Recorded entirely on 4-track, the album had a hidden majesty that would soon surface on later recordings beginning with their *Best Friends* single. The group would slowly transcend anything resembling a genre and become unclassifiable. Certain aspects of their music are of a psychedelic nature but the group brings it together with the heavy handed playing of the Gods of ROCK! With each subsequent album Oneida has become more enthralled with their instruments and have dug deeper into their psyches for a cacophony of noise and melody. And for who? Me? No child, they make music for you and the rest of the flock that have not yet heard the mighty songs they deliver.



Your most recent release, the double disc entitled *Each One Teach One*, is a bludgeoning of psychedelic rock. With each record you're not trying something new but something different. How important is it to keep yourself distanced from your last album?

Distanced? I think the best way to describe it is that we never try to copy our old records. Yes, we try to do different things, but usually we stumble across them. Recently, we've been writing ballads and trying not to be scared of coming across like the saps that we are. That said, every Oneida project is an opportunity for us to try something new. I think we've been able to do that so far.

Although the members of the Oneida collective have lived in numerous locales, it seems like your roots are firmly planted in New York City. How has living here affected your music?

Probably in ways we couldn't begin to imagine. Anyone who tries to have a creative life in this city really has to work their ass off. Sometimes you just get fucking tired of all the bullshit of making ends meet. I find the longer I play and do this, the harder it is [to keep doing it]. But good things seem to keep happening creatively so I feel good. But like all of America, everyone would be happier if we just punched a clock and went to buy shit on the way home.

How has it affected you personally?

God. I'm damaged, but probably tougher. I drink more coffee and booze than I ever have and smoke more weed now. I'm less sensitive and more cynical. Hopefully it won't get the best of me.

You've been involved with the growing scene in Williamsburg. Has the excitement, from what you can tell, subsided?



For who? *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*? I guess to a certain extent there's less of a sense of discovery for me. Discovery in the way we can bring music to more people. In the beginning of Oneida, when no New York City clubs would book us, we put on our own shows. We haven't done that for a couple years now. In terms of the scene, I'm really happy to know a lot of people are making cool music who all respect and admire each other. The other night I hung out with people in Sightings, Rogers Sisters, Black Dice, Broke Review and the people involved with the Twisted Ones and Version City

Records. For a second I thought, "Well maybe there's a scene here." I mean, I own all the above people's records and I totally stand by what they are doing and I wish them the best. I met them through rock. It's a cool community and if I'm a part of it then I'm truly thankful.

I realize that *Each One Teach One* isn't your most recent release but that *Atheists Reconsider* split with The Liars is. What was the impetus for doing that with The Liars?

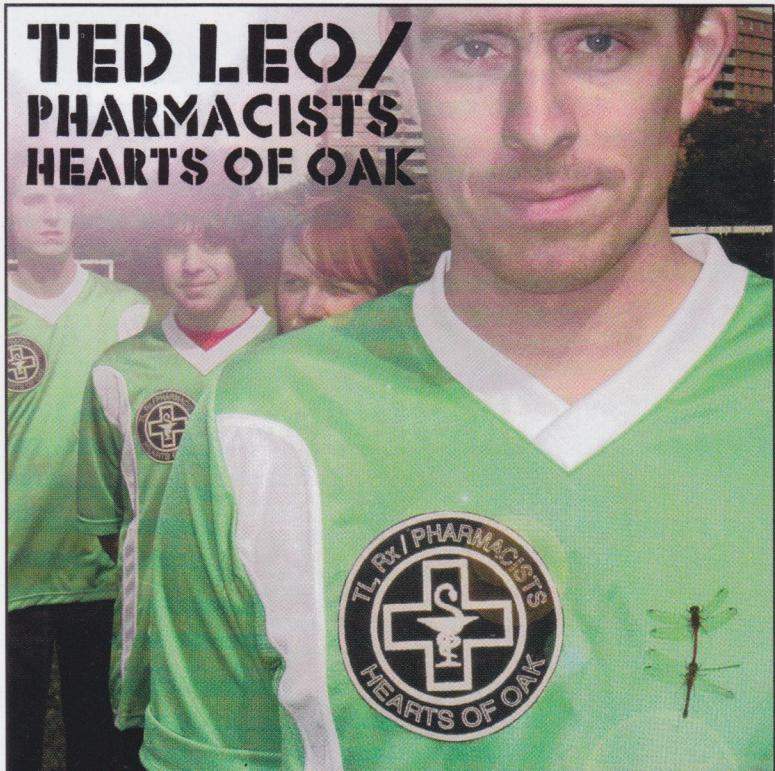
Arena Rock asked us to do a split with a band of our choice. We had recently started hanging out with Aaron from The Liars so we asked them. They said yes—and we cranked it out. Amazing. I think it challenged both of us and I think their version of "Rose and Licorice" realizes a ton of stuff we never could have conceived of when we made our recording.

I'm not trying to dis but when comparing both groups, Oneida is far more expansive than The Liars and many other bands are. Do you guys feed off of one another's energy to get to the point that you're at now?

You don't have to dis to like what we do. We aren't in a competition with the rest of Brooklyn rockdom. Oneida's put out 5 LPs, 2 EPs, and 2 singles in 5 years. The Liars have been around for a year! I mean, give them some time. When Oneida started out, we sucked ass. When The Liars started out, they were blowing minds. That's exciting. Sure we feed off one another to get to a finished recording or song or performance. Bobby has introduced me to so much music—we've known each other for 15 years or something. Me and Jane have been friends for less time but have influenced each other just as much. We just keep trying to have fun with music and stay sane in the context of all the bullshit of this city and trying to make music. It's really insane to do what we do. But it gives my life meaning for better or for worse.

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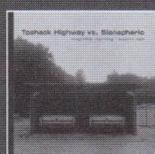


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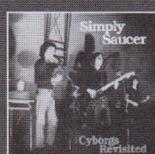


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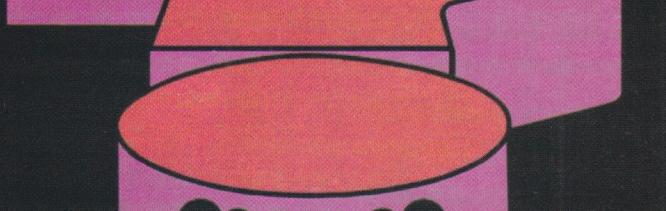
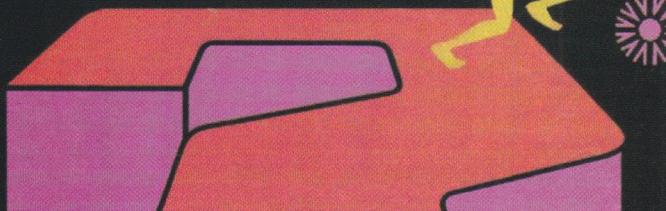
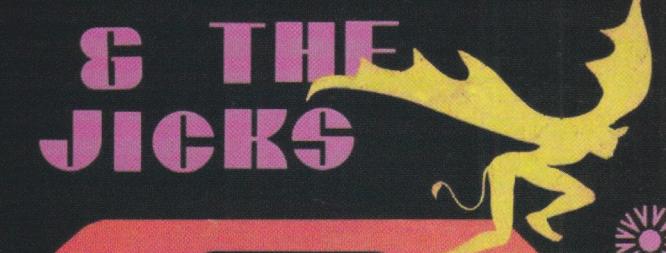


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Home Town Heroes

With the dot-com revolution over, the days of defining one's social standing with a live-work loft, a new Benz, and an upcoming IPO are over. With the economy rapidly heading down the crapper, jobs for recent college graduates becoming scarce, and laziness at an all-time high, Law of Inertia is intent on changing the way one defines their place in the social hierarchy. First stop, the legendary San Francisco watering-hole, The Little Shamrock, to get the average drunk's definition of social standings for a new era.



HAGGARD

DEADBEAT

BURN-OUT

LOSER

SLACKER

**GENTLEMAN
OF LEISURE**

**PROFESSIONAL
GENTLEMAN OF LEISURE**

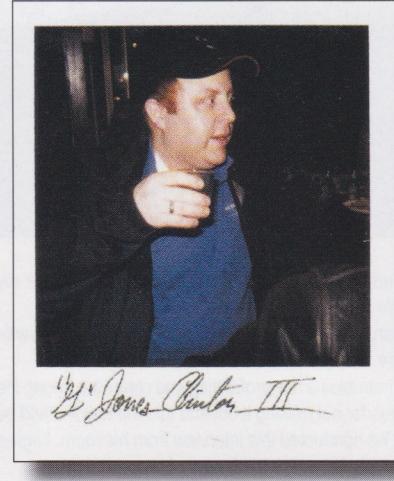


Mariana Sampaio
Cocktail Waitress

Haggard: "It's a bad thing, it is?"

Burnout: "For me, especially, it's not something good, again."

Slacker: "Yes, I love all people."



"G" Jones Clinton III
Chef

Haggard: "Waking up after two 750's of Jack Daniels and not knowing where you are or how you got there. Possibly in a different country."

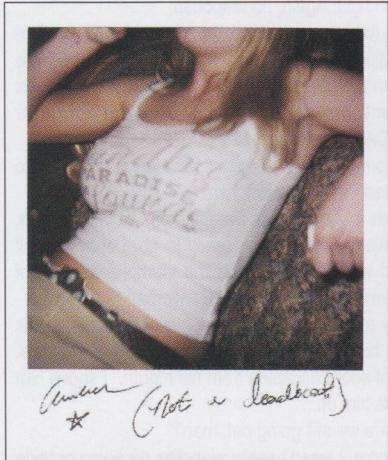
Loser: "A Raiders fan."

Professional Gentleman of Leisure: "A fellow that's all about fromby."



Mia Mitsuse
Student

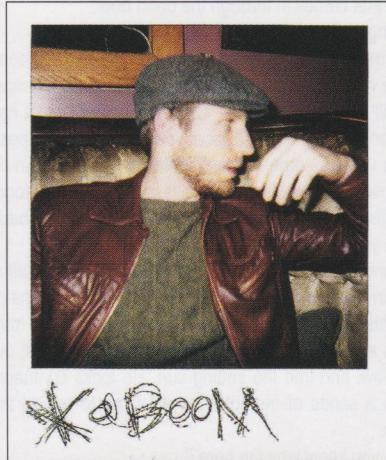
In response to all categories: "I've been thinking about those questions all night, and they fuckin' suck! I don't want to answer them. Please go away."



Amber Frederick
Bartender/Amateur Boxer

Professional Gentleman of Leisure: "Richard Gere comes to mind, that movie in the early 80's where he had tight pants... they play it all the time on cable."

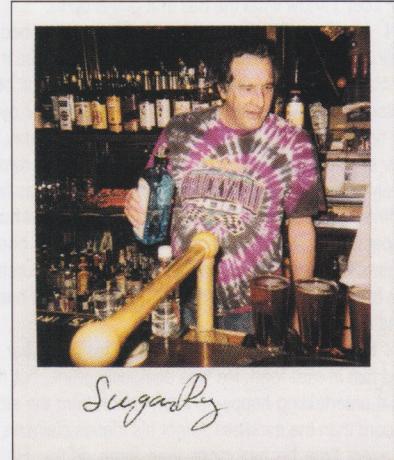
Deadbeat: "I don't want to go with run-of-the-mill loser, but, I know them. I know the deadbeats. Let me go through my phone book real quick. Someone who doesn't care enough to... Just a real loser."



KABOOM
Unemployed

Professional Gentleman of Leisure: "Don't ask me this... this is weird. I'm confused... I feel like I just smoked some pot... Um, fuckin'... Someone's who's life is just hangin' out, but also having some class."

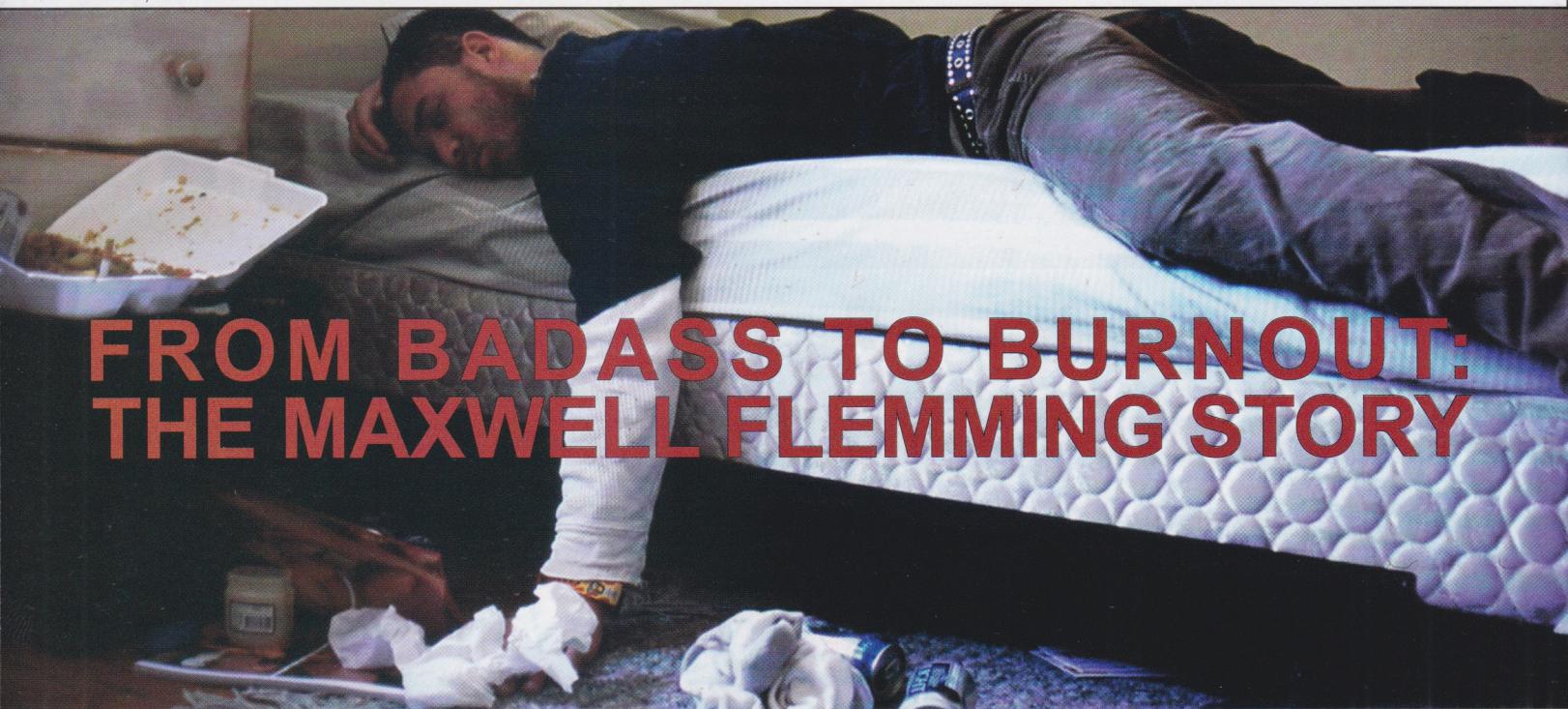
Deadbeat: "Um, fuckin'... Someone who's unmotivated, has no ambition, and no desire to help people."



"Sugar" Ray
Bartender

Deadbeat: "Someone who doesn't pay their tab."

* "Fromby," means "from behind," as in "I put a bag over her head and did her fromby!"



FROM BADASS TO BURNOUT: THE MAXWELL FLEMMING STORY

To even discuss the term Professional Gentlemen of Leisure without mentioning Maxwell Flemming would be a travesty. His life was once a model for anyone looking to lead a leisurely lifestyle. Yet the inherent problem with taking such a laid back approach is that it becomes all too easy to begin drifting away from a professional status, become a slacker, and eventually become any self respecting man of leisure's worst nightmare: the deadbeat. Rumor has it that this exact problem has plagued the once great Maxwell Flemming.

I caught up with his long time partner in crime, Lance Cannon, and asked about these rumors. He told me that they all were true. He continued by saying, "Yeah, you know, Max used to be a real PGL. He'd spend his days playing whiffle ball, skateboarding, playing guitar. He had a very leisurely approach to life, you know, but um, he still got shit done. He bartended for a while, had a lady friend... Now, I don't know what the hell that guy is up to."

I pressed for more questions. Lance became emotional, tears welling up in his eyes. He confided in me that Maxwell was on the verge of becoming a full blown deadbeat, that Maxwell has been out of work for over a year now, sleeps an average of thirteen hours a day, and never sees daylight anymore. At the age of 25, he remains entirely dependant on his parents for money and as far as a girlfriend is concerned, Lance claims that Maxwell has no prospects of any kind. Is any of this true? Could one of the pioneers of The Professional Gentlemen of Leisurehood have fallen so far from greatness? I decided that I needed to find out for myself.

I tracked him down one night at his local bar and found him in rare form. He was obviously drunk, but more of that entertaining happy-go-lucky drunk from the stories I'd heard than the mindless stupor his friends claim he falls into every time he has more than three drinks. He was going on and on about an upcoming trip cross-country, how he rented an RV, which he described as the "ultimate leisure mobile." "It's like at my living room shooting down the highway at 70 miles-per-hour." There were still a few spots open if I was interested. We agreed to meet at a coffee shop on Haight Street the next day to discuss.

A full hour after the meeting time, he is nowhere to be found. I call to see if he even remembers his drunken claims of the night before.

"Hello?"

Clearly this phone call has woken him up. I check my watch. It's three o'clock in the afternoon.

"Yeah, this is Noel Shankel from *Law of Inertia Magazine*. Is this Maxwell?"

He mumbles a few profanities and clears his throat. He apologizes for not making it out and told me that it would be easier if we conducted this interview from his room. I agree and make my way over to his part of town.

I ring the front doorbell. Nothing. I ring again. No response. I peer up to his bedroom window. A shadow of a head moves. Max slides open his window and leans out. He looks nauseous. Is he going to vomit? He lights up a cigarette.

"I'm comin' dude."

Ten minutes later, Maxwell opens his front door. He's still fully dressed, minus one shoe. A half-lit cigarette dangles between his lips. He shelters his eyes from the sunlight that comes in through the open door.

"Long night?" I ask him.

He mumbles some more and leads me up to his room. It is here where I get a better sense of the man. Beer cans, some still full, crowd his floor. Cigarette butts rest in a half eaten container of Chinese food. Porno magazines peek out from various corners. His TV blasts a fuzzy re-run on the Montel Williams Show. This is clearly the bedroom where dreams go to die. Max flops back down on his bed.

"Do you know why I'm here, Max?"

Silence. Has he fallen back to sleep? Max shuffles around in his bed for a minute. He flicks a few grains of rice off his mattress and sits up. He wipes the sleep from his eyes and gazes through his smoke stained blinds, out his window, and into the setting sun. He looks confused. Through a series of mumbles he asks me to repeat the question.

"Do you know why I'm here?"

He yawns.

"Um, kind of."

I remind him of the cross country trip he claimed to be organizing. I explain further that his friend Lance was worried that he had slid from a Professional Gentleman of Leisure into a full-blown deadbeat.

Another yawn.

"Lance Cannon... Son of a bitch. He's one to talk. He thinks I'm a deadbeat?"

"Well, at least on the verge of becoming one," I clarify.

"How do you feel about that? I mean, do you consider yourself to be a deadbeat?"

"No."

Maxwell says this with a slight tone of anger in his voice like he's had to defend himself to one too many people. I ask him, if he's not a deadbeat, then what is he?

"I'm a fuckin' Professional Gentleman of Leisure, man," he says, beginning to cough long and hard. It's an unhealthy cough. He flops back down in bed and rolls over to face the wall. The phone rings, perhaps a friend calling to finalize some details on his trip. Maxwell ignores the call.

The phone rings again. Once again, no attempt is made to answer it. I try asking Max a few questions about his current daily life in comparison to his past glories. He doesn't respond. I ask him to confirm a few rumors about his unemployment, his lack of motivation, his habits of avoiding sun light. Again, no response.

I begin to become irritated. I pitch an idea. I ask if he would be willing to go skate for a bit or play some whiffle ball. Then maybe we could grab a drink and talk about this trip. He mentioned something about going to Daytona for some NASCAR race or something.

"Um, some whiffle ball does sound fun and that trip to Daytona, man, it's gonna kick ass."

Max tells me to give him five minutes - a quick shower, a glass of water, and he'll be ready to go. I show myself outside and wait. Could this be the triumphant return of Maxwell Flemming, Professional Gentleman of Leisure.

Twenty minutes go by. The sun is now gone. I walk back inside his room. Maxwell is fully passed out. Jesus. I hear a light snore escaping from his mouth. I shove him a bit to wake him up.

"Max, are we still going out, man?"

"You know, I wasn't really planning on going outside today." He mumbles, falling back asleep.

Pissed off, irritated, and bored, I decide to show myself out. Before leaving his property I reach into my pocket and grab a pen. I leave my mark on his front door. "DEADBEAT" in bold black print. I take one more look up to his bedroom window. Again, I see a shadow of a head move. Could this be the start of his day? Is he going to make a move? No. The head falls back down. Fuckin' deadbeat.

Condolences, Maxwell. Condolences. ☐

Millions of years ago, long before there were any people, there were dinosaurs. Dinosaurs were one of several kinds of prehistoric reptiles that lived during the Mesozoic Era, "The Age of Reptiles".



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Law of Inertia's Guide to 21



Professional Gentleman of Leisure: Ferris Bueller

The quintessential PGL. He never really works too hard or makes any elaborate plans but good fortune constantly comes his way—catching the foul ball at Wrigley Field, jumping in on a parade, and driving a Ferari, (that is, until Camron drives it out the window). He also possesses any true Professional Gentleman of Leisure natural ability to stay out of trouble. Yeah, they gave Ferris some close calls in the movie, but that was only to keep people in their seats. Do you really think this guy would ever get caught for anything?

While most things '80's have become tackier than fly paper, Ferris' outlook on life remains the benchmark for any aspiring Professional Gentleman of Leisure.



Gentleman of Leisure: Cosmo Kramer

Perhaps Kramer is best defined by his trip to a fantasy baseball camp, "Kramer going to a fantasy camp?" asks George, "He falls ass-backwards into money, mooches food off all his neighbors, and has sex without dating. That's a fantasy camp." The only thing holding Kramer back from true Professional Gentleman of Leisure status is his annoying habit of reverting back to a bumbling Stanley Spudowski in search of his mop.



Slacker: Jeff Spicoli

Every time he exits his van, a cloud of smoke follows; whenever he eats, it's going to be shirtless; and he ordered a fucking pizza to his history class... pizza! His life's dream consists of winning a surfing contest and getting a babe on each arm. Unfortunately, his "mellow" is always "harshed" by lame authority figures like Mr. Hand.



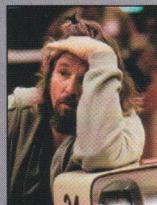
George Costanza: Loser

Pushed small children, and the elderly, out of the way during what he thought was a fire, was engaged to a woman he was glad to see die, and his life can be summed up in the pick-up line he once used, "Hello my name is George Costanza, I'm bald, unemployed, and still live with my parents." Summah ah George!



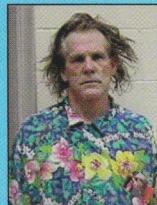
Burnout: Al Bundy

"Al Bundy, a burnout? I can think of plenty of other things to call Al Bundy," you might say. Despite his four touchdowns in one game, his life now consists of a wife he finds totally unattractive, a slut for a daughter, a retard of a son, and a job at a mini-mall shoestore. Mr. Bundy, you have officially given up on the game of life.



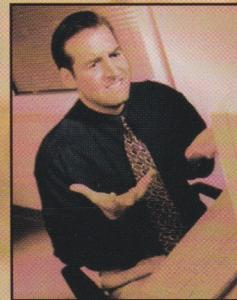
Deadbeat: The Dude

The Big Lebowski: "Your 'revolution' is over, Mr. Lebowski! Condolences! The bums lost! ...My advice is, do what your parents did! Get a job, sir! The bums will always lose-- do you hear me, Lebowski? The bums will always lose!" The Chief of Police in Malibu: "Stay out of Malibu, deadbeat! Keep your ugly fucking goldbricking ass out of my beach community!" Uh, dude, it's the tenth already and you still haven't paid your rent.



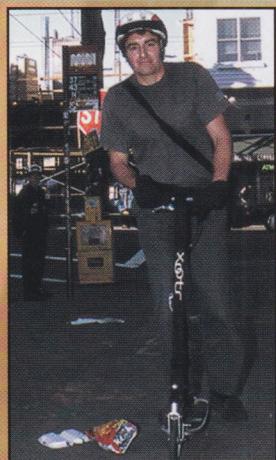
Haggard: Nick Nolte

C'mon Nick, you were found drooling and incoherent in the drivers seat of your Benz. In your mug shot, do you think you could look a little more homeless? Maybe next time...



Deadbeat:

No intention of getting a job, massive debt that will probably never be repaid, and little reason to get out of bed in the morning. Someone society has all but forgotten.



Burnout:

Any artistic or creative ambition has been chalked for a mortgage, kids, a nice home in the 'burbs and a good school district. Works 9 to 5 for roughly 40 years before realizing that 65 is way too old to begin a life of leisure.

Haggard:

Typically homeless for the past ten years, any viewings make you cringe, extended viewings will make you nauseous.

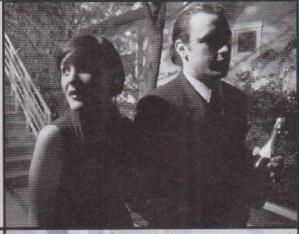
Loser:

Just a happy-go-lucky guy, but any grown man riding a scooter with a gay-ass helmet (an activity typically reserved for 8 year olds) makes him a loser in our book.

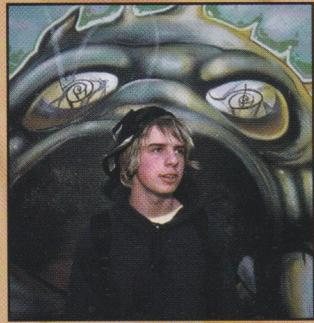
st Century Social Standing



Here we find a Professional Gentleman of Leisure, Wyatt Ossa, a.k.a. "The Christ Figga" leisurely going about his daily activities. As we can see, he is equally at home lounging on the couch, bong in hand, as he is on a night out on the town, a woman on his arm and a champagne bottle never out of reach. No doubt on his way to some grand fete, we can count on the Professional Gentleman of Leisure to be the life of the party.

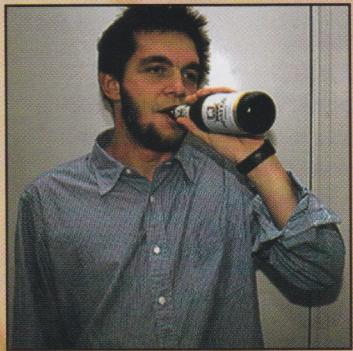


To fully understand the Professional Gentleman of Leisure, consider this analogy... There are many people in the world who enjoy sports, but only a select few who we consider professional. Likewise, there are many people in the world who pursue a leisurely lifestyle, but only a select few who actually achieve professional status. It is a long process to master, and cannot be learned from words alone, kind of like asking someone how to be a ninja. It is a way of life



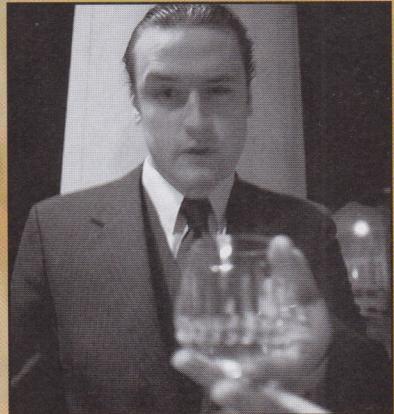
Slacker:

Typically supported by their parents, instead of worrying about getting a job, they spend much of their energy avoiding being cut off from the precious supply of money. Once the money dries up, Slackers can easily drift into deadbeatism, and if they are not careful, eventually become homeless, which of course leads to the bottom of this social standing... haggard.



Gentleman of Leisure:

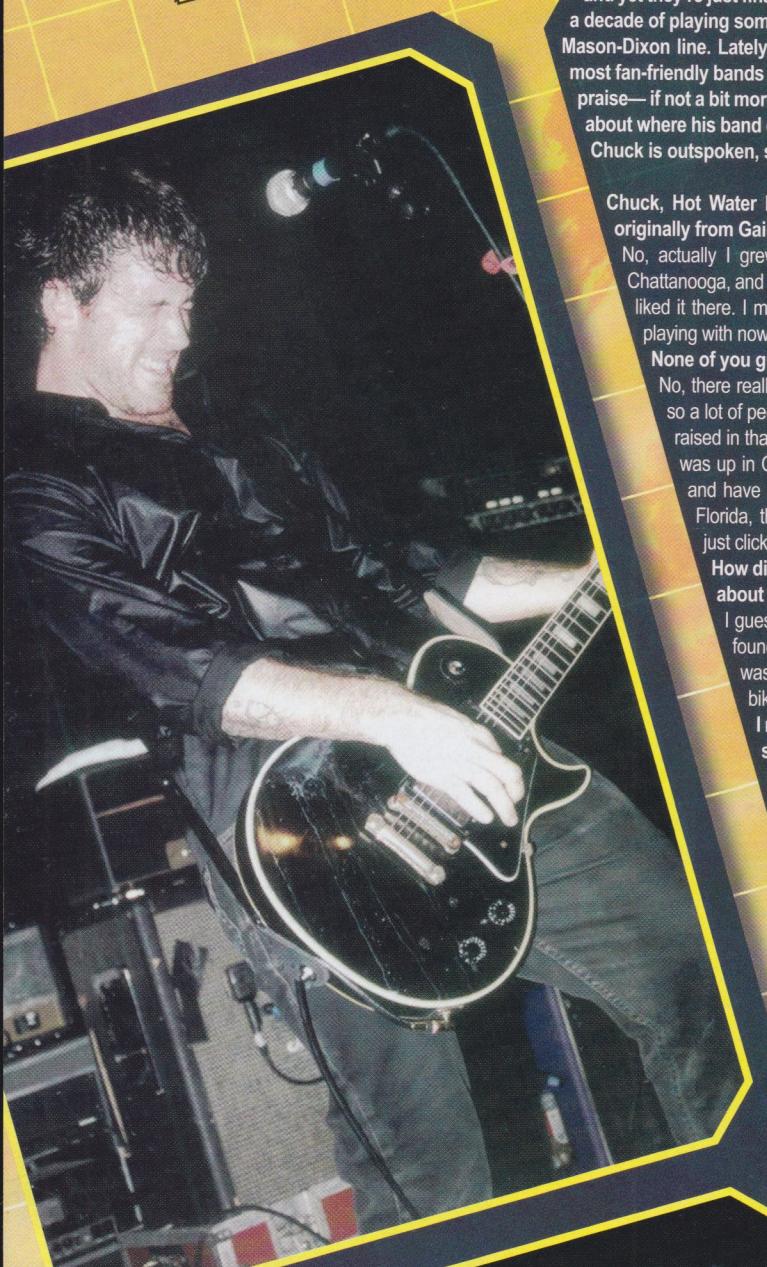
Two girlfriends, one hot American, one hot Italian. The american knows about the Italian, which she's cool with, and the Italian is blissfully in the dark. The living situation is unclear, but he always appears well-kept. The work situation is equally unclear, but a round of drinks is never a problem.



Professional Gentleman of Leisure:

Defined in his own words: "Someone who displays constant drive to manifest leisure in an appropriately convenient and relaxed manner. It is the inalienable option of the Professional Gentleman of Leisure to nap whenever so inclined; to have cereal at any hour, day or night; and to keep his clothing leisurely: a leisure suit, a jump suit, a track suit... anything that ends in suit."

HOT WATER MUSIC



Does Hot Water Music really need any introduction at this point in their career? They have toured with everyone in independent rock worth touring with; they've released six full-length albums, all of which are great; a ton of singles and EPs; and yet they're just finally starting to break through to the mainstream after almost a decade of playing some of the most honest, ass-kicking music on their side of the Mason-Dixon line. Lately, the band has received a ton of press for being one of the most fan-friendly bands playing aggressive rock, and they deserve every word of their praise—if not a bit more. I recently got a chance to sit down with Chuck Regan to talk about where his band came from and where Hot Water Music is going. Like his music, Chuck is outspoken, sincere, and honest. Would you expect anything less?

Chuck, Hot Water Music is thought of as a Gainesville, Florida band, but are you originally from Gainesville?

No, actually I grew up all over the South. I was born in Houston; I lived in Georgia, Chattanooga, and a few other places. I spent a lot of the golden years in Chattanooga, I really liked it there. I moved to Gainesville in August of 1994 to play music. All the guys that I'm playing with now, we all moved up there together.

None of you guys are originally from there?

No, there really aren't a lot of people that are originally from Gainesville. It's a college town so a lot of people are in and out of that place. It's rare that you find people that are born and raised in that place. All four of us, we all played together in different bands before and Jason was up in Gainesville going to [University of Florida] at the time. We wanted to be together and have a place to play. In the place that we came from in Sarasota, on the gulf side of Florida, there wasn't much happening. So Gainesville seemed like an obvious solution. It just clicked.

How did you get involved in punk originally? Where were you when you first found out about Naked Raygun or something like that?

I guess it started in Chattanooga in a weird sense, but I never really got into it, I just kind of found out about it. It seemed totally foreign and dangerous and crazy to me. Skateboarding was what definitely got me into punk rock and what got me into skateboarding was freestyle bikes. In the early '80's in Chattanooga, BMX was the big thing.

I meet a lot of bands these days who clearly know very little about what the roots of the style of music they play are. Do you ever meet bands and think, "it's amazing that this person is playing in this band considering they know nothing about punk rock"?

Sure, but everybody grows up. Personally I think punk rock is a hell of a lot more than just music. I think it's an expression and an attitude. Before it's music, before it's fashion, it's an attitude. When I grew up punk rockers weren't cool. If you were a punk you were uncool. I don't know what changed the line from punks being uncool to suddenly being cool, but for me it was about rebellion and a finger in the face, "fuck you," to my parents, and society, and the church, and school, anybody that was at an age that felt that they could point their finger down at me and tell me that I wasn't living the right way. But, in those days when I was in 6th or 7th grade, all those early years, it wasn't cool. The only people who considered it cool to be punk was yourself. [laughter] It was like, "Fuck it, I'm cool because I'm doing this!" Everybody else thought you were a freak, you got talked down to by your algebra teachers.

I don't want to put words in your mouth, but having lived through that do you ever feel animosity to people who are playing in the punk scene for punk record labels and punk clubs who have never really dealt with the type of animosity you dealt with for being a punk?

No, not at all. I think that everybody has their own ideals of what and where they come from. What was crazy and rebellious and punk rock, or whatever you want to call it, to me could be something completely different to somebody else. They see rebellion in a different light. Everybody grows up and goes through their own trials and tribulations, and it moves and affects them and inspires them or drives them in one way or another to become the person they are now. When I think of if people went through their punk phase or not, or whether it helps them to do what they're doing nowadays, well, that's not very vital to me. Everyone comes

to be the person they will eventually become by their own path, and just because I had people who told me I was a jerk because I rode a skateboard and another person didn't does not make their path any less vital or important. That's just a minuscule very short piece of history of that person's life or my life.

I read a review of your new album, *Caution*, in a magazine recently that called Hot Water Music the quintessential punk band playing in America today. I'm curious as to what you think of that?

I don't know, we do what we do and I think there's a lot of bands that are doing what we're doing. I'm flattered that someone would think so highly of us and give us props like that, but I can't vouch for that. I think a lot of people are doing just as much as what we're doing, if not more. It all depends on who's getting credit for it at the time. I know a ton of bands who are honest and right-on people and play incredible music that at the time and the moment don't get enough credit.

On a different subject, what's really interesting to me about a lot of bands today is that so many musical outfits have only one original member, or even no original members, while Hot Water Music has been together for almost a decade and everyone in your band is an original member. What do you attribute that to?

We're just best friends, we're family. It's not always pleasant. Any real family, whether they admit it or not, can be somewhat dysfunctional. That's basically where we're coming from.

We've been through thick and thin together, in the band and out of it, and we're brothers—we love each other like brothers, we fight and we eat at each other's patience just the same. But, we're family. To me that's the most special thing about Hot Water Music. We're on a family level, and everyone involved with us and everyone who works with us is on the same level. We only work with people that we consider friends or people we think we could develop a friendship with that surpasses business.

I know you're very close with Var at No Idea.

Everyone that we work with we're close with and that's the most special thing about the whole project. We work with our friends and people we care about almost exclusively.

Would you say that if Hot Water Music has a message then the family vibe—the idea that family is extremely important—is the message?

Yeah, definitely. Communication is key, togetherness, empathy, understanding, it's all key to us.

That's so interesting because being in a band that tours the world all year long you kind of have to make small sacrifices like having girlfriends or super close relations that you see and hang out with all the time.

Well, to do this band I've had to make quite a lot of those sacrifices. I've wondered if that's a selfish thing, for me to give up those little things that people in one place can do, I've wondered if that may be me being selfish. I have a tendency to make other people happy before I make myself happy and a lot of times that ends up with me putting nails in my own coffin. You know what I mean? That was just the way I was brought up to live and the way I love to live. I love to help my friends and be there for the people I care about. I also believe that what goes around comes around, relationships are give and take.

Is there anything you think, "this is such a huge sacrifice to give up but if the band broke up tomorrow it would be okay to have this thing in my life again"? Like a steady girlfriend or normal living situation or something?

Sometimes personal time I miss and I'd love to have. [laughter] I'm practically married to three other guys in my band, and it's cool, I love them to death, but it would be pretty cool to have time to spend by myself. I have a girlfriend right now, I'm in California right now and we're spending time together for a month and a half. But, this is the first time I've had a lot of personal time in a long while.

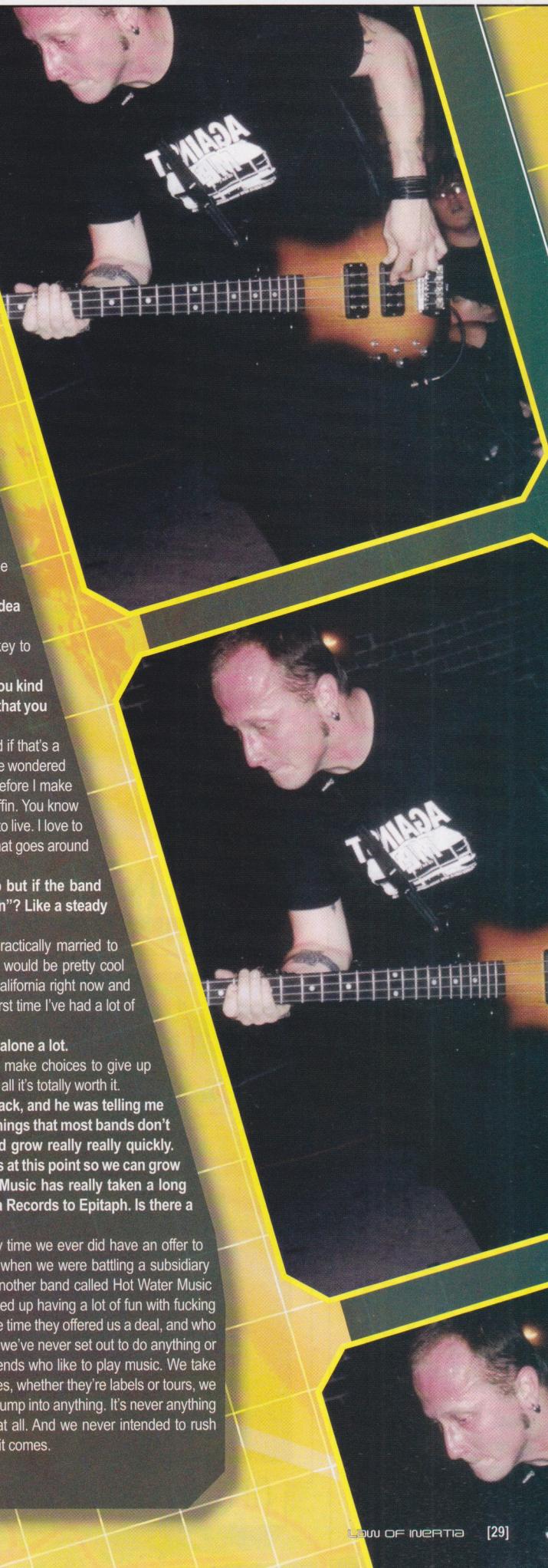
When you're driving 7 hours to get to Iowa, you really can't be alone a lot.

Yeah, but it's like doing anything else that you love. You have to make choices to give up certain things in order to do others. You have to pay a price. All in all it's totally worth it.

I did an interview with Geoff from Thursday a few months back, and he was telling me that his band has been presented with a lot of offers to do things that most bands don't have to deal with. Things that would have made his band grow really really quickly. They have decided, "we want to make these compromises at this point so we can grow at this rate for this time." At the same time, Hot Water Music has really taken a long time to grow. It took you a long time to go from No Idea Records to Epitaph. Is there a reason you guys took such a long time to grow?

For one, we've always wanted to take our time. The only time we ever did have an offer to make a big jump from, say, No Idea to a big label was when we were battling a subsidiary of Elektra Records over our name. They had signed another band called Hot Water Music and we had to battle them to keep our name. We ended up having a lot of fun with fucking with them and fighting with them, [laughter] but at one time they offered us a deal, and who knows where that would have gone. Other than that we've never set out to do anything or be anything other than what we are. That's four friends who like to play music. We take things as they come, and when we get opportunities, whether they're labels or tours, we consider those decisions very carefully, we don't jump into anything. It's never anything half-assed, everything is whole-hearted or not at all. And we never intended to rush into anything, we just want to take our work as it comes.

www.hotwatermusic.com



FOCUS: NATHAN GRUMDAHL

by Celeste Tabora

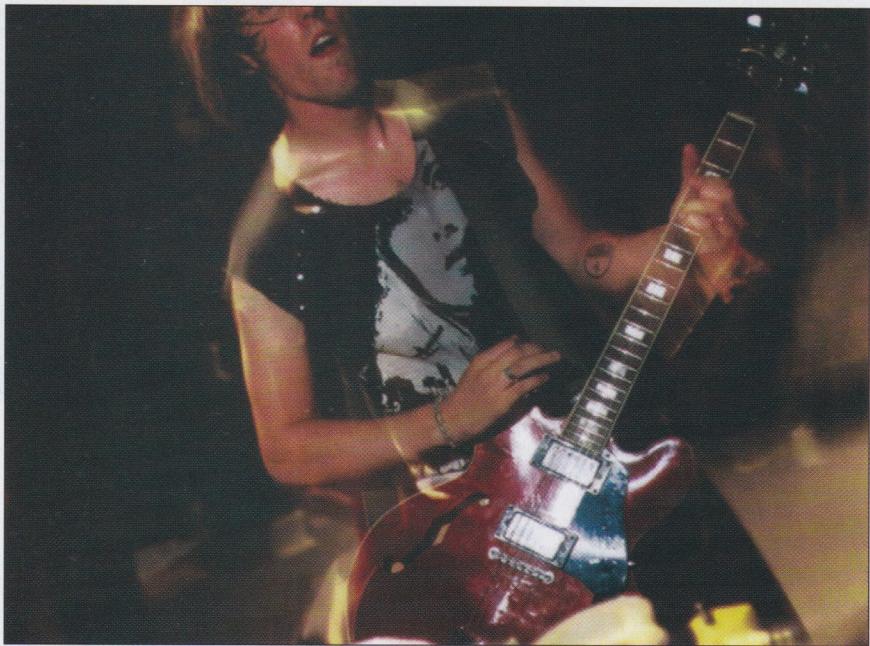


Profile: After stumbling upon an old Polaroid Land Camera in his late teens, Nathan Grumdaahl started taking photos. Like many misfit punk kids trapped in suburban high schools, he found photography courses to be a good escape. Music was also an outlet for Nathan, who was a member in the bands Arm and Selby Tigers. His two loves began to co-exist in his life. "Since I played in a band and started touring more, my interest shifted to documenting live music and the people who play it," says Nathan. His drive in archiving live band images is to capture the motion or "fireworks" of their live performance in a still format. He particularly likes to photograph animated performers with longer exposures, conveying movement in an almost surrealistic manner. Outside of music, Nathan enjoys shooting large format industrial landscapes and signage of the midwest.

Nate Grumdaahl can be reached through nathaninny@yahoo.com



Har Mar Superstar

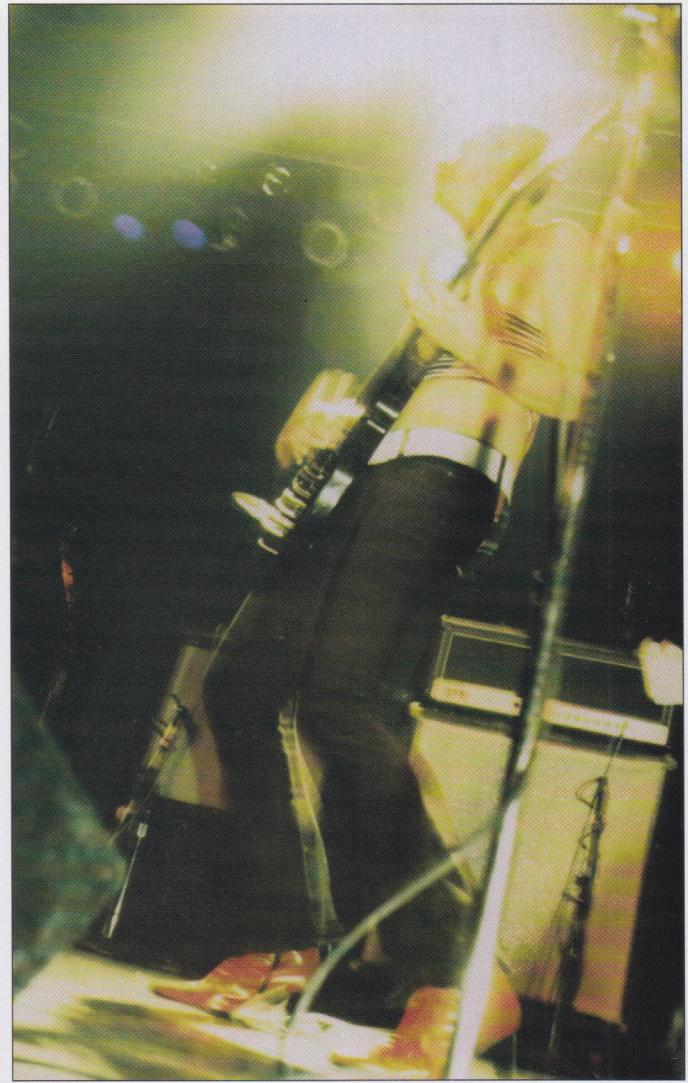


(International) Noise Conspiracy

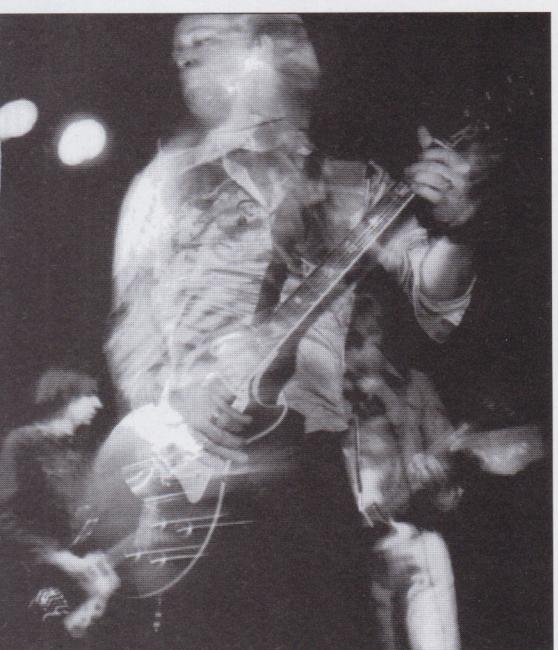




World Inferno
Friendship Society



The Soviettes



The Pattern



David of Tortoise

WORDS: CELESTE TABORA



CAT POWER

In the past, many articles have presented Cat Power, a.k.a. Chan Marshall, in one of two ways. Those who have met Chan (pronounced "Shawn" and short for Charlyn) first hand tend to view her as an over-apologetic wallflower, often recoiling from social interaction; yet those who know her only as Cat Power sometimes see her as a volcanic, unpredictable person, occasionally storming off-stage mid set in scary freak-out mode.

As I prepared to interview her, I found a warning between the lines of her press clippings: she may get really nervous and shy. She may shamelessly dodge certain questions. She may walk out.

Set to meet her at a loud, smoky, and un-trendy bar in SoHo, I walked in and cautiously sat down, feeling out the surroundings and wondering to myself, "How can I do this without freaking her out? Wouldn't such a fragile person be uncomfortable being questioned by a total stranger?"

I knew this was Chan's third day of interviews in New York, and I was her last one of the day. She had to be exhausted, ready to reinforce any negative stereotypes I had come across, but I wanted Chan to prove them wrong. I wanted her to be unreserved, confident, and forthcoming.

I spotted Chan sitting against the wall, her bangs almost hiding her eyes, the rest of her long hair shielding her from her surroundings—a visual representation of her disposition—but her smile was welcoming, her demeanor curious. After brief introductions and clumsy handshakes, I eventually drew my tape recorder out of my bag. Her eyes immediately locked onto it like a cowering dog awaiting the blow of its master's hand. The warnings of past articles prepared me for this reaction.

Chan begins to explain her reaction to my tape recorder with a series of stuttering half-sentences and I reassure her that her reaction is understood, gesturing towards the intimidating device on the table. She groans, saying that she always forgets that this is part of the interview process. As she lets her last sentence trail off, it is clear that neither of us feels quite at ease at this point. I begin to think about how I can get her interested in talking.

"You know what?" I say, preparing to reveal a part of myself in hopes of breaking the ice, "Right now I'm going through this interviewing-is-trivial phase. I think it's ridiculous to ask people questions about their lives and where their art comes from, when all you should do is appreciate their art form for what it is."

Chan's eyes widen, followed by a smile. "It's perfect. It's perfect," she says, agreeing with my statement and immediately looking more comfortable. All of a sudden she is smiling, a warm southern-girl smile. She states that there can be no answer, since the people doing the creating often times can't explain why they're doing it in the first place.

In an attempt to get me to relate, she tells me I probably don't know what I'm doing by interviewing her either.

But I think I do, so I retort, "I'm trying to bridge a gap between the artist and the public. But I would like the artist to be represented in a way they find comfortable." Having rehearsed this in my head many times, I'm pleased to have finally said it out loud.

"I like that," Chan declares. "But the artist *is* the public because everybody does something so special. And maybe it's not special, but everybody does something."

I nodded, telling her that I agree completely.

"I wish there were more people like you," she says in a sincere manner. I can tell she's aware that these interviews are a necessary evil, but clearly not her favorite pastime.

"How many interviews have you done this week?"

"I don't know... It's not that bad. It's pretty bad, but... It's not that bad. It's not that bad. It's not that bad..." she repeats the statement like a broken record, as if she wants to remember or convince herself of this.

"Like you're saying... It gets hard to like..."

"It loses its meaning after you've said it a million times?" I say, trying to finish the thought.

"Or it never gets said. It keeps on—" she says, making a circular motion with her hands, symbolizing what I take as a perpetual motion with no resolve. "You know?"

"I do! That's why I want you to say whatever you want to say."

"I don't know what to say!" she laughs.

In an effort to keep the flow of our conversation going, I ask how long she's been away from her adopted home city of New York.

"I'm always gone," she says with a longing. But a longing for leaving again or staying longer—you can't tell. Perhaps it's both.

In preparing for this interview, and then talking to Chan, I found one facet of the articles I read to be true, Chan apologizes a lot—for nothing. You may get the impression from Chan that her first word was "sorry," and she will use it at any given opportunity, even if it means apologizing to the car door if she slammed it too hard.

Though her movements and gestures are presented in a manner of ease with herself, her start-and-stop, sometimes broken sentences display a childlike intimidation of strangers. She seems to teeter in between adulthood and adolescence like that of someone who grew up too fast.

Perhaps that's exactly it—she might have grown up too fast. She reveals her birthplace only as the state of Georgia, even though I know she moved all over the south as a child with her mother, sister,



and brother who has cerebral palsy. I've read about her showing up at her father's doorstep with a garbage bag full of clothes, only to get kicked out of the house after flunking the 10th grade. She started playing guitar at 19 and formed Cat Power at 20—a name she admittedly stole from a Cat Diesel hat. Shortly after forming Cat Power, Chan moved to New York even though she had never been before. She sometimes performs alone, sometimes with a couple of borrowed musicians from Dirty Three or Sonic Youth. Her critically acclaimed album, *Moon Pix*, which was her fourth album (her second for her steady label, Matador) garnered many loyal fans, as well as the pressure to create an equally beloved follow up album, which turned out to be an album full of covers aptly titled *The Covers Record*, where Chan covered The Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," "Paths of Victory" by Bob Dylan, The Velvet Underground's "I Found a Reason" among others.

It feels like cheating to know so much of these things about such a private person and yet here I am sitting with her with the sole purpose of asking her to reveal more.

As a quick escape from the interview and with no apparent reason, she briefly befriends a couple in the table next to us. Becoming the interviewer as opposed to interviewee, she asks the couple where they're from, what they're doing, and why they are in the bar. When the guy notices the tape recorder and asks why we have one, Chan claims we're government activists. I fess up and tell him Chan's an artist. She denies the label over and again shaking her head so that her hair hides her face just a little bit more.

"I am not an artist," she says.

With that conversation over, we find ourselves once again facing each other at opposite ends of the small table. The interview then shifts from her life to those who dissect it, take it apart, and air it out for the world to discover. She claims that music critics and journalists sometimes put personal preference before critique. Then she becomes a critic of critics. "It's almost like comparing comparisons," she says. "They're referencing comparisons rather than anything resonating originally within."

Not knowing how to respond, what exactly she meant, or whether she grouped me in to those who compare comparisons, I quickly ask the first question that pops into my head. "So what happened today that you absolutely love?"

"Meeting you. Um, meeting you and meeting her," she says, motioning towards the female from the table next to us, "and my boyfriend being here thirty minutes ago." And then it's off on a tangent about how she loved waking up with her beau; not having to rush out, and taking the time to just lounge around in bed.

"And where have you been?"

"Everywhere," she responds

"And where are you going?"

"Everywhere."

We laugh at our silliness, but I began to feel this looming "you-need-to-ask-a-music-related-question" guilt.

"You know where I'm going?" she says excitedly, "I'm actually going to Taiwan and Tokyo. I've never been to Asia before."

Seeing how ecstatic Chan was made me equally excited for her, as if she was an old friend. I realized how comfortable we had become, both revealing that we don't come from the "normal" white-picket-fence standard of parenting.

Then she apologizes again, either for revealing too much or asking too much. A lull in conversation after her soft-spoken "sorry" allows me to get back to business.

"How do you feel about your new album?" I ask, and then immediately apologizing for asking. It must be contagious.

"I'm just happy that I'm alive to turn it in instead of someone else turning it in for me."

I'm tempted to ask her where such a morbid answer could come from, but her fragile conduct convinces me to refrain from delving too deep.

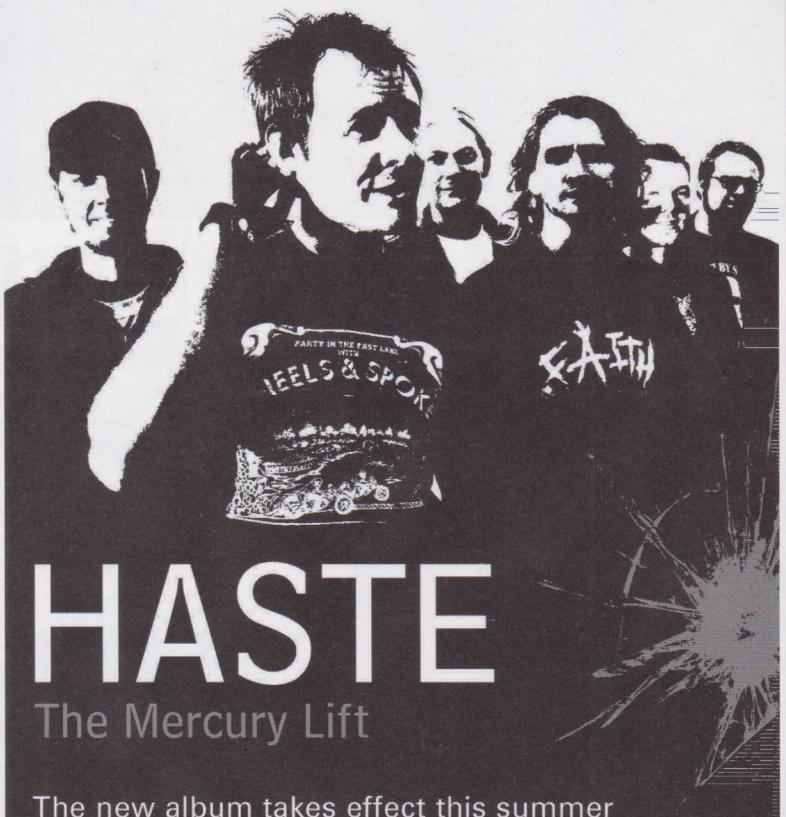
"How much time did you spend in the studio?" I ask instead.

"Within a year, every couple months - a couple days here and there." She finishes up her thought, "Um, yeah. No. It doesn't matter. Sorry." She recorded in Los Angeles in 2002 with engineer Adam Kaspar, who has worked with both Pearl Jam and the Foo Fighters. The result is titled, *You Are Free*, a recalling of *Moon Pix* with a rockier edge. It's Cat Power's first album of original material in nearly four years.

Feeling that our conversation is nearly over, I feel compelled to ask Chan one final question, fishing for what I hope will be an unadulterated answer. "What does matter after a while?" I ask.

"You," she answers, smiling.

Still unsure what she meant, we said our goodbyes and to my surprise—our meeting ended in a hug. The first and only interview I'd ever done that ended in an embrace. Perhaps it was because I allowed myself to relate to her as opposed to just berate her with questions. When thinking about her last recorded answer, I laugh a little. Of course she would say that. She seems very much from another consciousness, like a true artist, with her thoughts always on the sublime. In the end, I uncovered the most grounded, flighty-yet-shy, misunderstood musician and she goes by the name Cat Power. ▀



HASTE

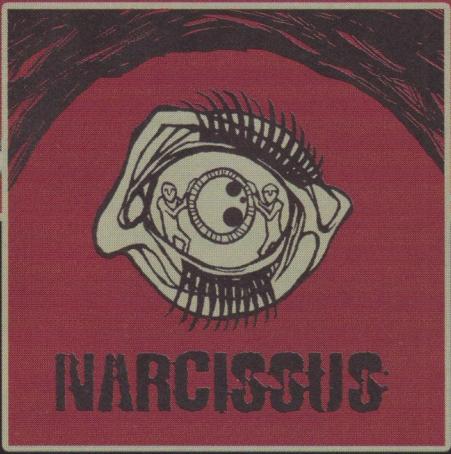
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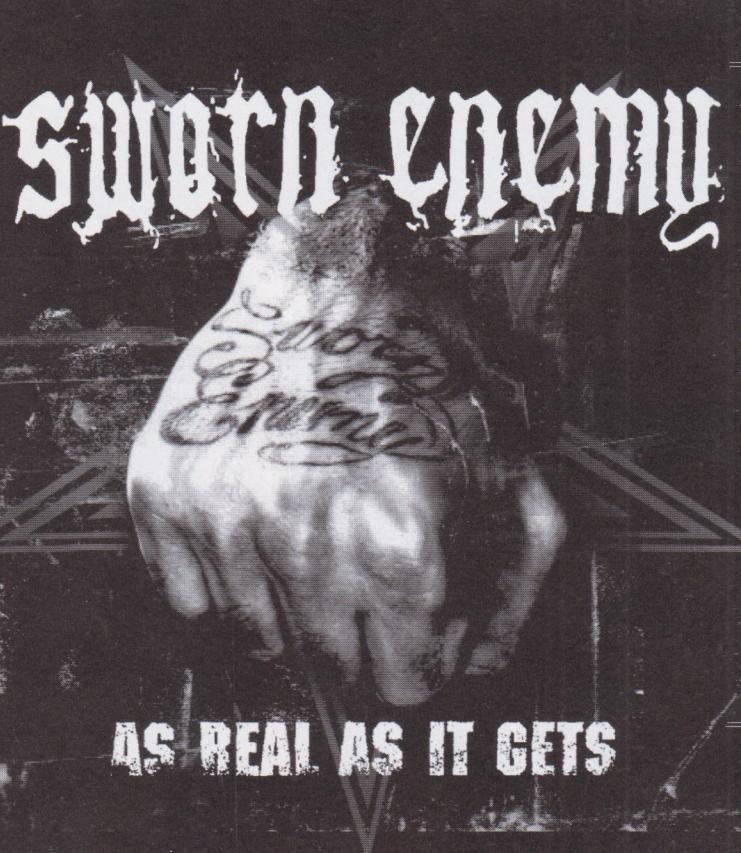
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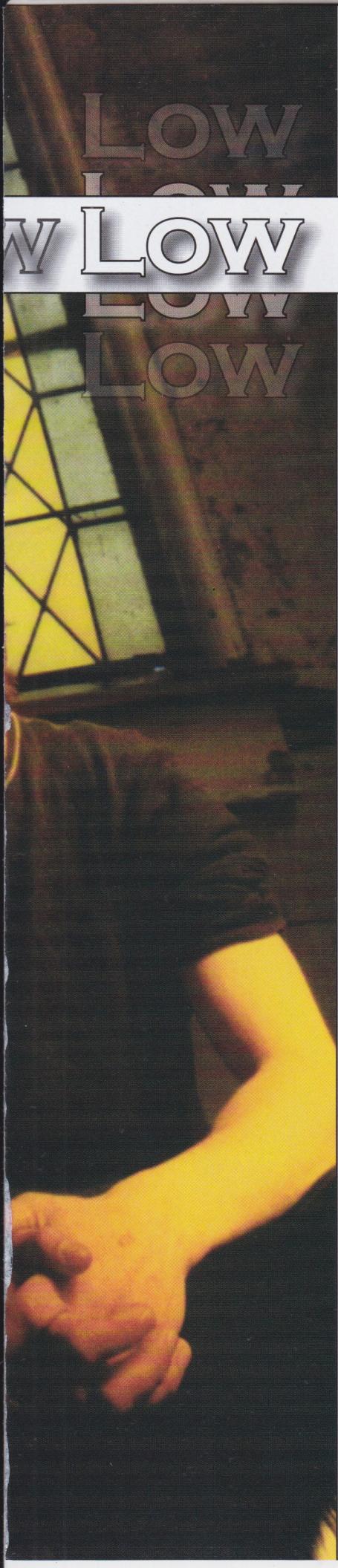
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LOW LOW LOW LOW





The Dismemberment Plan's Travis Morrison recently called Minnesota "a model for U.S. politics," while Har Mar Superstar can't stop telling his hometown crowds how much the city of Minneapolis fucking rocks. Everyone knows that Minnesota is becoming more and more hip by the day—a far cry from when Hüsker Dü, Soul Asylum, and The Replacements were obvious anomalies. But what most people don't know yet is that Minnesota has become a focal point for Midwestern indie rock. Right now there is a growing indie scene in Minnesota that includes bands like The Crush, Dillinger 4, and more. One act that is building a strong international following among fans of indie, pop, and even heavy metal, is Low. Low is one of the most interesting and beautiful bands to grace a recording console in recent memory—their music is as haunting as any other band playing today—and they love their state as much as any other artistic collective in the great white north (when sitting with them, they frequently mourn the passing of leftist hero, Senator Paul Wellstone).

Low sits left-of-the-dial sonically more than politically, and is quickly earning attention and esteem for bringing the unexpected to the table of independent music. For one, Low understands the sound of winter in a way that most don't. People who live in permafrost conditions by choice are made of something different. Something Gap marketing execs suspected during one of their never-ending campaigns to co-opt independent music and culture, spotlighting Low's version of the "Little Drummer Boy" in a commercial. More importantly, however, listeners knew the Duluth, Minnesota band's foresight with the first affecting strains of the seminal *Things We Lost in the Fire*. Their 6th full-length and latest album *Trust* (Kranky) raises the bar that much higher.

The band occupies an interesting space in the indie rock landscape for a number of reasons. Not only for bringing seemingly disparate sounds together (reverb-drenched percussion, distortion/echo effects, a banjo, and their trademark spots of minimalism to name a few), but for making a career out of music while preserving their own values in an industry that sees them as talented, but an anomaly nonetheless.

Their stark and reverent sound has become so recognized that the band has superficially become a reference point for describing new music, e.g. "Is it slow? Slow like Low?" Some critics and music geeks have even thanked them for ushering in the rebirth of "slowcore" following the demise of shoegazer music to grunge in the 1990's. Two members of Low have their own record label called Chairkickers Music, and wear a DIY moniker over their discography not entirely unlike the humble beginnings of the Seattle bands who left their initials on sonic history. All the passion and intensity of that movement is there in Low's music beneath the waves of reverb and ethereal melodies and

harmonies of husband/wife team Alan Sparkhawk and Mimi Parker, and the uncannily fitting counterpoint of Zak Sally's bass guitar.

The trio describe themselves as "two Mormons and a non-believer," the former being Alan and Mimi. Their music has been called modest and subtle, which makes the adage about art imitating life especially vivid. When I asked how the band improves themselves as musicians, they shrugged off the inference saying only "we know our limitations," and deferred to a kind of inexplicable solidarity that occurs when the three of them play together.

If it's surprising that two Mormons and a non-believer can click so well, it may also be surprising that Alan and Mimi not only make straight-up indie rock music, but are also active in the Mormon church. Mormons in the music industry are nothing new, between Dishwalla's Scott Alexander, the Osmond family, and Bowie's former guitar player/engineer Mick Ronson, yet the image that mainstream culture, and even indie culture has of Mormonism is that it's something to rebel against (think of the film *SLC Punk* and Utah rockers The Used). Alan affirms the public's vague misconception, noting that "the social tone within the church tends to steer young people toward a stable, family-oriented future," but adds, "at the same time, we learn that every person is different and has their own unique calling in life. The older generation Mormons are a bit more conservative, but I think the newest generation of the church will yet surprise the world."

In addition to stretching notions of what ideals and lifestyles are compatible, they push the envelope of what fits into the vague genre called indie. Though some are quick to assume it, their music is in no sense of the word Christian rock, making only understated nods to their faith on *Trust* in a line like, "I am the lamb, and I'm a dead man" along with the tense, almost menacing opening track "(That's How You Sing) Amazing Grace."

Trust features Gerry Beckley of America and was mixed by Chad Blake (who has also worked with Elvis Costello, Pearl Jam, and Kristin Hersh). Attempts to trace the roots of their musical influences are more disorienting than enlightening; Zak's a Zeppelin fan and Alan really likes the Flaming Lips. Alan is also a member of the twisted rockabilly blues band, Black Eyed Snakes.

When I spoke with the three members of Low, the political climate was the most emotional I can remember. We shared one common response that resounded throughout the state of Minnesota, the Senate, and much of the country. It was the afternoon that Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone was killed in a plane crash just a week before a re-election he was favored to win.

Wellstone is remembered by many as the most compassionate and liberal Senators of the last decade, representing Minnesotans by giving voice to those without power or influence (such as immigrants and the mentally ill), and by standing up to President Bush's war mongering policies as few other Senators dared.

When Low played Pink Floyd's "Fearless" at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities' radio station that day, it was hard to keep a dry eye. The dozen or so college kids who were crammed in the engineer's booth with me were silent in reflection, hanging on every chord. Alan told me later that the saying about wanting to just get along doesn't necessarily entail that everyone agree, and that in general, people shouldn't always do so. That's why we have checks and balances, and should be more excited than surprised by people who are willing to stick their neck out and say "no" to the status quo or, "I have an alternative." Low lives this sentiment in the music they create and the way they share it, reminding us to applaud the fearlessness of those who have the integrity to disagree. ■

PHOTOS: DALE RIO [big] and JERRY GUZMAN [small]



COHEED AND CAMBRIA

Coheed and Cambria is an awesome band. They are not, however, the type of band that goes down as easy as most of the music you find on MTV or commercial (or even college) radio. Instead of typical, boring pop hooks that sound like they could be just as easily be found in the mall as they could a concert hall, Coheed and Cambria seem to bring their own sound into a music scene that sometimes seems as if it's barely keeping its head above water. Firstly, the instrumentation utilized by Coheed and Cambria is far more complex and technical than most rock bands these days, much less the music played by their contemporaries. Secondly, their singer, Claudio Sanchez, has a voice that not only booms over anyone else with whom the band might find themselves sharing the stage, but it is unlike anything you've ever heard before. Imagine Geddy Lee and Robert Plant getting in a fight with HR of Bad Brains and you're getting close. And trust me Sanchez's voice is an acquired taste that one does not warm up to overnight.

Seriously, I'm the first one to admit that my first impression of them was wrong. If you look at the review I gave their Equal Vision debut full length in Law of Inertia #11 you'll be surprised that I am now sitting here singing their praises. However, I saw the band open for The Movielife and The Reunion Show a few months ago and was swept away by the manner in which Sanchez's voice seemed to ebb and flow like a tide; the way the dynamics of the music created a chaotic whirlwind of sound that rushed like a wave over the audience. I was hooked, line and sinker.

After a quick internet search on the unique name, I found that the band seemed to have some rather interesting views on what their music meant and how it fit into the grand framework of aggressive rock and roll these days. Coheed and Cambria can hold their own next to any band in the nation, but if asked to make comparisons, I would say their music draws more similarities to the fusion-metal of the early '90's or the prog-rock sound of the late 1970's, as typified by bands like Rush and King Crimson. Singer/guitarist Claudio Sanchez and I recently sat down to discuss where

his band fits into today's modern rock and roll scene, and if they're even on the same page with the rest of the bands in their community.

Where are you from, Claudio?

I live in a small town called Nyack, which is about 45 minutes from New York City.

Is there much of a music scene there?

Not really, and there is very little interest in hardcore or punk amongst kids here past stuff like Blink-182. I find that a lot of people I meet who are in really good bands that are in some way associated with the punk or hardcore scenes often have very little familiarity with punk or hardcore as a movement.

Do you find that odd?

Not really, it just seems like a sign of the times. When someone refers to a band as hardcore it doesn't necessarily mean that that band has anything to do with what Black Flag or Minor Threat represented. When I think of hardcore I think of something from the old school like Bad Brains or if it's new then something really hard and fast like Converge. But sometimes Coheed and Cambria or A New Found Glory gets referred to as hardcore because we're on what has traditionally been a hardcore label or because we're part of the scene. I don't know, I don't really see it. I don't really see us as a hardcore band.

So when people ask you what your band sounds like, what is your response?

Well, usually I say we sound like a progressive rock band. Essentially that's what we are. Our songs are pretty elaborate and long, they have ups and downs, so we're definitely not a pop band and it's not really fair to call us a straight-up rock band. I generally just say a progressive rock band because everyone generally knows what that means.

There's just so many negative connotations that comes with being a prog-rock band. I mean, people associate you with Yes or Rush or something which really is not what you are.

Yeah, if anything people associate us with hardcore bands far more than Rush or King Crimson. I was never really a fan of the '70's progressive rock scene, but I admired the way they played and the things they did to the melody of rock. I don't really know about the connotations that come with being a progressive

rock band because I come far more from what the Bad Brains are doing than what Rush is doing and I think we sound far more like the Bad Brains than we do like Rush anyway.

Yeah, and if you're the only prog-rock band in the punk scene than maybe it's because you're approaching aggressive rock differently than most other bands.

Maybe, perhaps. I see a lot of progressive elements in Glassjaw—who I'm a huge fan of—maybe Further Seems Forever, but all those bands are drawing a bit more from punk than they are from Rush, you know? Now, I was reading your mission statement on your website....

I didn't write it so I can't really comment on it, and it was written when we weren't even called Coheed and Cambria yet. At that point we were still called Shabutie. It needs to be changed or taken down.

Well, I've got a question about *The Bag*. I was talking to Mic, your bassist, about a composer from the early 19th Century in France. The composer's name was Berlioz. Ironically enough the only instrument Berlioz played with any proficiency was the guitar. But Berlioz wrote a piece called "Symphonie Fantastique," which is written in a fashion called "program music."





Program music means that the piece has a story attached, usually in written form, and if you do not have the program—or the story—then there's no way for you to understand what's happening in the music. What do you think about this concept? Do you think that Coheed is the type of band where one needs to know the motivations behind the music in order to understand the songs?

Yeah, kind of. As you know I have this story that I'm working on called *The Bag*, which is a story that follows the band. At the same time I just want the band to be a band and have music to be first and foremost. With that said, I'd like *The Bag* to be a multi-representational piece of art—in this case it will be a comic book graphic novel—that can be read in relation to music, specifically Coheed's music—but at the same time can stand on its own as a cool story. I want them to live separately. They are connected, but it's not everybody in the band's thing to make a story out of our music. So I don't want to drag three other guys along this path that they may not want to go on or even care about as much as I do.

Then again, it's your job to write the lyrics.

True, so by that rule I get to choose what the songs represent. But, I'd like to keep them separate for now. Eventually they will connect more and it will be hard to avoid one or the other. When that happens the songs will make a bit more sense.

Do you think they don't make sense now?

Um, if someone listens to the record and knows that there's a concept they'll start to try to look around for it. But the problem is that the lyrics are written with the intention of being vague so the listener can come up with their own interpretation.

Do you like the idea that your music can transcend past music and move into another medium, like comic books or movies or something?

Yeah, I very much like that idea. It almost makes the music seem more interesting and vital.

In Berlioz's case, his symphony transcends back into his own life, and "Symphonie Fantastique" is actually about a woman that he loves so much that it eventually leads to his public hanging.

Wow, that's intense. I like that, when you know the full story it takes on a new meaning and means more than just some [musical] notes.

What brought the story of *The Bag* on?

Well, in 1996 I went to visit a girl I knew in Paris for the summer and I brought a guitar along. I went to a small town outside of Paris and decided to do a side project from the band I had at the time—called Shabutie—and my new project would be a concept band called Coheed and Cambria. I made some demos as the years progressed, but the idea died. When Shabutie decided to change its name and we then adopted Coheed and Cambria, it was like a rebirth of sorts.

I know you're very influenced by comic books.

Anything interesting to look at I find inspiration from. [I like] comic books, I love horror movies, science fiction, all that stuff.

What comic books do you like?

I haven't had a chance to follow any being on tour for most of the past year and all. Plus, when you're on tour and it's either food or a few comic books, you choose food. Before I stopped I loved a story called *The Red Star*, and it was a cool book written by the guy who I'm told designed the double light-saber for *The Phantom Menace*. I was a super fan of *Spawn*.

What were your thoughts on comic books being made into movies, like the *Spiderman*, *Daredevil*, the *X-men* movies, or the *Incredible Hulk* movie coming out soon?

I love them. I love to see my favorite comic books come to life and move. They seem to leap from the pages. I thought they did a good job in the case of *Spiderman* and *X-men*, but I haven't seen the other two yet. I thought the movies held remarkably true to the original stories in the comic books. I was into them.

How did Dr. Know from Bad Brains get into the picture?

He's always been a friend of the band. He's always known Josh, our drummer, and he lives in Woodstock which is the neighboring town to Kingston. He knew the guy that mixed our record so it was kind of a favor thing on his part. We didn't write him a huge check to play on our record, we all knew him beforehand. If we see him it isn't kind of "hello, nice to see you again," we actually hang out and go out to bars and talk. He's a super nice guy, so is Darryl Jennifer.

When you talk to him, does he have any sort of stereotypical Rastafarian accent? I have this

image of all Rastamen talking in a Jamaican accent.

Well, when you talk to him, his speech is filled with a lot of "bing, bang, booms" and stuff like that, but he sounds like a dude who was a pretty smart guy from Washington DC. Dr. Know is awesome.

Does he understand where you're coming from, 20 years after the Bad Brains were at their heyday?

Yeah he does. He knows what it's like to be a struggling musician, and even more than that he knows what it's like to be talented, have a huge buzz, and still play music that is a bit off the beaten path which is cool because not too many musical "legends" fall into that category of empathy. You can sort of tell because the solo he played on our record sounds awesome. We didn't have to tell him what to play, he just sat down for a few minutes, hammered away, and rocked.

I'm curious as to how the reception to Coheed was when you first started playing. Was anyone taken aback by what you were doing, in a negative or positive way? In other words, was anyone shocked?

Shocked, I don't know. There are definitely people who don't like it, period, and people who have told us they had to warm up to us first. I think a lot of the bands we tour with are either totally like that or totally not. Like, I think bands like Hopefall and Thursday are totally more interesting than so many bands you hear on the radio and I'm sometimes surprised so many people like them. We've been approached by people who have told us negative and positive stuff. We really didn't set out to do something different just for the sake of being different. We've all been writing music and have been in bands since we were 13 so this is just how our writing and playing style has progressed. We're not into being outcasts.

Can you sing any other way, or...

This is just the way the music pours out of me I guess, this is just the way I attack it. If I try to sing I automatically go high. On the next record I may try to toy with my voice and bring out my Barry White vocals. We'll see.

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ash ash ash ash

It all started in 1989 with Ash's bassist Mark Hamilton and vocalist/guitarist Tim Wheeler, then in their teens, begging their parents for guitars. Once their wishes were granted, they practiced, started a band, and spent all their waking hours playing deafening death metal riffs. Calling themselves "Vietnam," they were fixated on becoming the next Megadeath. As the two matured, their goal towards the sound shifted away from a metal edge when they met their drummer Rick McMurray, a schoolmate who once scoffed at their previous musical attempts.

At merely 17 years of age, their debut EP *Trailer* had them flown to London to be poked and prodded by labels and the media. Soon after, they recorded their breakthrough album, titled *1977*, due to Mark and Tim's birth year, which also coincided with the first *Star Wars* movie (a collective Ash obsession).

Ash toured the US in support of this Britpopish album, released a single called "Girl From Mars" about loving a spacey girl, and collapsed under the pressure of being chart-topping media darlings. There was drama, addictions, arguments, arrests, and of course, nervous breakdowns.

A second guitarist, Charlotte Hatherley, was added before they laid down tracks for their sophomore effort, *Nu-Clear Sounds*. This album showed a significant change in Ash's music. It was still melodic and poppy, but the music showed a rougher, raw, angst-ridden tinge to it. This change wasn't well received with those who had embraced the band in the past. Ash's sound on their latest album, is a mix of the music found on their *1977* and *Nu-Clear Sounds* albums, exhibiting the maturity of a band taking control of their musical direction. Touted repeatedly by the press as a definitive rock album, *Free All Angels* received various nominations, awards, and many spots on top ten lists all over the Western world. Ash has persevered the ups and downs of rock life and will continue to overcome. Mark Hamilton recently talked to Law of Inertia about recent events and *Free All Angels*.

Free All Angels is a great record. One can see why it has caused such a ruckus in the UK. [Time Out London named *Free All Angels* Album of the Year, and the single, "Burn Baby Burn," received single of the year honors at the Q Awards, plus, Tim won the prestigious Ivor Novello songwriter award for the song "Shining Light"] How do you plan on convincing America of *Free All Angels*'s greatness?

Tour, Tour, Tour! Try and win as many fans as possible by playing with as many varied bands as we can to build up our

own fan base and then hopefully word of mouth will help it to do well.

It does seem that Ash is attempting to make their mark on America again. It's been a few years since you toured here. What are you doing differently this time?

Well we were out of contract in America as things with Dreamworks didn't work out. Luckily for us Kinetic Records realized how great we were and signed us up. In a way, it was good cause we had spent 18 months touring the rest of the world and we could now concentrate on America and tour here for as long as we're wanted. It looks like we'll be touring here well into the spring. It's a long haul but America is so big we'll need to put in the time to establish ourselves here.

Has it been a humbling experience going from having a number-one album and headlining sold-out gigs in the UK to being sort of an underground buzz-band in the US?

Not at all, it's a new fresh challenge and we're totally up for giving it our best shot.

How did everyone recover from the tour bus accident on the West Coast after your Southern California dates on Moby's Area 2 tour? What happened?

Everyone's fine now, thanks. The accident happened on our way through the mountains in Oregon heading towards Seattle. It was around 7 o'clock in the morning, everyone else was asleep and I woke to hear the sound of the tires rubbing against the ridges at the side of the road. We'd been driving for like 14 hours solid. I thought to myself, "Oh no, the drivers fallen asleep." I thought it'd be best to go back to sleep and everything would be okay. Minutes later there was a big crash and it felt like the bus was balancing on its side. Everyone on the right side was thrown out of their bunks. Charlotte was in a bunk three rows up landed on top of Rick who was at the bottom and broke his ribs. It was all very surreal as it happened in pitch black and no one knew what the hell was going on. The driver hit a tire which was in the road and tried to swerve but it went up under the back wheels into the fan belt. Broke off all the blades, which went into the radiator, which blew up and wrecked the back end of the bus. We were stuck then in the mountains for like 6 hours. Rick was in a lot of pain but went through [with] the Reading and Leeds festivals the following week.

Have you had any scary flashbacks?

Any flashbacks [are] scary. Seeing Charlotte flying in what seemed like slow motion through the bus was quite amusing.

How did you enjoy the Moby Area 2 tour? Was it hard playing so early to half full venues or did you enjoy the challenge?

Yeah, there was *that* picture that Rolling Stone printed which wasn't too good! Actually it looked worse than it was. We [had] opened for Moby and Bowie at about 3:30 in the afternoon so by the time we went on stage we were maybe only playing in front of about 2,000 people spaced out in seated amphitheaters with a capacity of around 12,000. It was hard work to motivate ourselves to do it but we made a lot of friends and there was a lot of press and media profile on the tour. It's all about introducing ourselves to as many people as possible, since then we've played to packed crowds with Coldplay and Dashboard Confessional and are presently playing sold out shows with Saves The Day. It's been a long but great year of touring.

Did Charlotte ever work up the nerve to speak to David Bowie?

Charlotte was pretty speechless after seeing Bowie watching us from [the] side of [the] stage, we also introduced comedian Andy Dick to Bowie, they are mutual fans so that was quite funny. Also after the bus crash, Bowie sent us a "Get Well Soon" e-mail which

HOPESFALL

I first encountered Hopesfall at the Million Meathead March, otherwise known as Hell Fest, this past summer. Amid the generic metalcore "chugga-chugga" and the 101 Slayer clones was Hopesfall, the biggest surprise of an otherwise unmemorable festival. There had been a strong buzz on the band for some time ever since word got out that the white-hot hardcore label, Trustkill Records, had been discussing the possibility of putting out their next record. The band had released a previous album on Alabama's faith-based Takehold Records, and loyal readers of *Law of Inertia* will note that we're not too keen on the un-ironic mention of God in the music we choose to patronize. Needless to say I was wary.

But there I stood at Hell Fest and saw Hopesfall rock harder than a thousand bad metal knock-offs with their brand of cathartic, dreamy, music that walked the line between shoegazer sometimes and hardcore at others—an odd combination, I know. But to really understand Hopesfall you simply have to hear their music for yourself. Their recently released *The Satellite Years* is a very good place to start. It may be the one record that bridges the gap between Poison the Well and (old) Swervedriver, which is pretty amazing when you think about it.

Some bands have lofty messages in their music. Other bands simply want to rock out and look cool. For Hopesfall, I'd say these two reasons for playing music are checked at the door. Instead, the band seems to play because they are truly moved by the music they make. Watch them up on stage—they don't look like they're trying to impress the crowd or exercise the ghosts of some childhood trauma they never quite got over. Rather, after talking to one of Hopesfall's very congenial guitarists, Josh Brigham, you can see that the members of Hopesfall play music because they love what it does to them and how it makes them feel. If you like it too, well, you're just along for the ride.

Now, I know that you guys used to be on the Alabama faith-based hardcore label, Takehold Records. After Takehold closed its doors did you guys get any offers from some of the bigger faith-based record labels out there?

Chad, who ran Takehold actually works at Tooth and Nail now. And Solid State, which is associated with Tooth and Nail, sent us a few versions of some proposal contracts that we didn't like and weren't very fair to the band. We actually signed one of them and we were ready to send it in, but then at the last minute we were like, "you know what, we don't really want to go this route." We didn't want to limit ourselves by being on a faith-based label. As far as that's concerned, a couple members of the band are

Christian and a couple are not, and we all get along really well and respect each other's views. But it was pretty much a unanimous decision to take a more mainstream approach to releasing our music rather than directing it at a specific, yet sizable, community of fans. We didn't want to limit ourselves to that genre. It's never been an issue for us, really. We just have a great time together and what our beliefs are has never been an issue. These guys are my best friends—they're my family.

As I understand it, you guys got together as just a fun thing to do, as a way to kill time. How did it turn into a full time thing from there?

It was one of those things where we were honestly really bored and a couple of us were in college away from Charlotte, North Carolina, where we're from. We would just get together and jam and we would set small goals for ourselves. The first goal was to play a show, the second goal was to play a show at a real venue, and it just kind of went from there. We were writing songs just to have fun 'cause we had nothing better to do. We didn't start off trying to change the face of music or anything grand like that, we just wanted to write cool music for fun. As we realized people were responding to it we set higher goals for ourselves, and it just went from there.

At what point did you say, "okay, we've got to quit our jobs now, we've got to make this our lives"?

Well, I always wanted to graduate college which I did last December, so I graduated with a history degree and I'm pretty proud of the fact that we could build our band and go to school and work our jobs all at the same time. We got to a point where I was out of college and some of the other guys were too and we were either going to make a commitment or start having normal lives. We've been doing this for five or six months now and we're trying to see where we can go.

How is the Charlotte, NC scene? You hear about Chapel Hill bands like Superchunk but you never hear about any other scenes in North Carolina.

Yeah, that's the thing. When we started there was no scene. The only thing that was popular as far as heavy music goes was straight-up metalcore. Stuff like VOD or Pantera. When we started people laughed at us for playing melodic music while they were expecting heavy chugga-chugga music. All the bands were into Hatebreed while I grew up listening to Siamese Dream by Smashing Pumpkins and You'd Prefer an Astronaut by Hum. It's not that we're not into metal, but that's not what we wanted to play. Hum was my all time favorite band.

Yes, I absolutely love Hum too. Their two records are like godsend to me.

That first song on *You'd Prefer an Astronaut* I could put on loop and listen to for the rest of the week straight. Josh, I totally agree with you. I think that song, "Little Dipper," is one of the most soothing pieces of music ever written with electric guitars.

You'd Prefer an Astronaut fits every mood I'm ever in.

When I'm in a daydreaming mood that record is perfect, when I just want to wedge-out and go to sleep, that record is the first one I go for. That band sort of played shoegazer, kind of played metal, had a bit of the indie/punk thing going, but they were just a visionary band that never got the credit they deserved. Their six-minute songs weren't too good for radio. I also think they took themselves out of the game a bit early—that or maybe the people they worked with didn't know what they were doing—but that band should have broken and for some reason never did. Unfortunately Green Day and the Offspring broke at the same time, so people didn't quite notice Hum.

I'm not surprised you're a Hum fan since Matt Talbott produced your recent Trustkill full-length *The Satellite Years*.

That's true, he did.

Is there anyone in your band that does listen to metal or really hard music?

Um, I really enjoy bands like Dillinger Escape Plan, Coalesce, Every Time I Die, Drowningman, and stuff like that. Old Cave In I find to be incredible, back when they were a hardcore band. I really like all over the place kind of music. But my roots are The Pixies, Hum, Dinosaur Jr., stuff like that. For a while I got into this phase where I was like, "you know what, I'm into hardcore now, I'm in the hardcore scene," and I mothballed all my Smashing Pumpkins records. But then I realized, "this stuff is too good, I can't get rid of this stuff!" So, I'm back to being an early '90s Alternative Nation dork. You listen to those records and they're just as valid today as they were when they came out. Maybe even more valid, because I think bands like Hum were ahead of their time. It's surprising how much in underground music people know that band. They only sold like 300,000 records—if that!

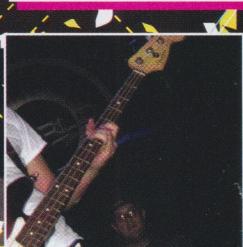
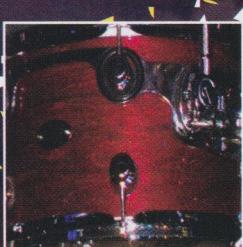
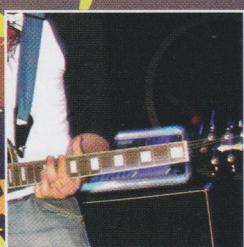
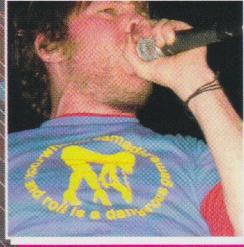
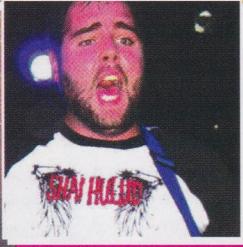
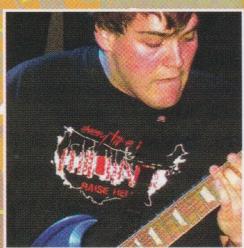
They only had one radio hit and people that listen to our band or Glassjaw or something still listen to Hum. And that's maybe why we're getting the attention we're receiving.

You're looked at as sort of torchbearers of a sound they conceived?

Yeah, maybe. You still hear songs like "Stars" on the radio. When people ask me what bands we're influenced by I say, "have you heard Hum," and they're like, "totally!" even though you wonder how honest the kid in the From Autumn to Ashes shirt is being in those situations. [laughter] But, at least they've heard the name.

I always said the cover-art for *Downward is Heavenward* is so gorgeous!

Yeah, how they put the time length of the record on both of their covers? That's so cool! [much laughter] Hum had this really big space theme; on your new record you guys have that type of thing too. Is there a common unifying theme on that record? The artwork and the lyrics make me think there is, but I'm not sure.





We honestly made a conscious decision to write a spacey record—we started off with that theme. Maybe the common theme on the record—and you may not see it on the surface, but you will if you read into it—are ascension and escape. We tried to capture that very specifically. The guy who did our artwork, who runs a design company called Toward the Sky, is a good friend of ours and I gave him two working terms: ascension and escape. I want you to do something visually that portrays those two words. The whole process for the concept of that record took a couple months. We previewed material that did not get used and it finally came down to those 16 pages, and we were all very excited about it. So then after we brought all the various concepts and ideas to the table—our music, the art, our themes, our lyrics—*The Satellite Years* just seemed like an apt title.

When you say ascension and escape, why do those two words mean so much to you?

We write about ourselves and we write about what we're going through. The record is about us and what we were going through at the time. We had some hard times around the time we wrote *The Satellite Years*. You know, classic stuff, the van breaks down, you lose members over school or other problems like jobs—it was basically a hectic time with a lot of turmoil that we wished we could get out of. We wished we could get out of the mire that we were in.

So for you guys at the time, music was your escape?

Yes, without sounding cliché, music was an extremely cathartic thing for us and something that was extremely freeing for us to do during our days, so it was only natural that the theme of escape would come into play in the meaning of the record. As you said, we got to work with Matt from Hum.

Yeah, how did you hook that up?

We were really big Shiner fans—
Another band I love that I feel is underrated!
The Egg is such an amazing record—
Shiner has the best rhythm section in independent rock in my opinion.

Oh, completely. Shiner is awesome. Their drummer and bassist work together better than any others in rock and roll. So we were reading the liner notes to *The Egg* and it said it was recorded by Matt Talbott and J. Robbins. We were like, "Holy shit! Matt Talbott has a studio, we have to go there to record!" We called our manager and asked him to check it out and they made the call. It turns out he has very reasonable rates, he has an amazing studio and our record became the first record he completely engineered by himself.

When you met him were you like, "we love you, we think you're a god!"

Yes, I think we freaked him out at first. We were like, "what was it like touring with Bush, how do you play this, can you show us this guitar part?" He was freaked. After we broke the ice we were doing drum sounds and everyone was kind of standoffish because we are all huge fans of Matt Talbott and Hum and he's a really humble guy. There was some tension and our drummer kept going, "Hey Matt Talbott, how do those drums sound?" He wouldn't call him Matt, he would call him only by his first and last name. That's kind of how our humor works—persistently annoying enough so that if you can take it then you're one of us. Fortunately for us he could take it and we eventually became friends. We do that to Josh from Trustkill, our label. Josh is so amazingly straight-and-narrow in appearance that I used to call him and be like, "Josh, I'm not hanging up until you tell me that you love me." Of course he'd just hang up on me, but it was hilarious to us to do that to people we like and respect.

He likes Good Charlotte.

Yeah, he likes really brutal hardcore and some really shitty pop-punk. Actually, we met the guys in Good Charlotte—

The guy I met from Good Charlotte was a really nice guy.

We partied with them and they're totally nice guys. They bought us drinks for 4 hours.

Are you into their music?

They're really nice guys. [laughter] But I'm not into their band. However, at the show we went to there were 2500 hot girls screaming for Benji and Joel, and at our shows there are no hot girls screaming for us. [laughter]

I'm curious as to the spiritual aspect of this ascension/escape thing. Were you afraid that the

people who aren't necessarily into the whole Cornerstone, faith-based music scene would misinterpret the way you guys depict ascension and escape? Were you afraid they would mistake it for a religious themed record?

We wanted to do something that would stand out. Not to be critical, but I've seen a lot of half-assed album art and we did not want to do that. We wanted to have something that would turn heads, and you cannot deny that the album we made for Trustkill is a beautiful looking record, if it's not beautiful sounding.

It's true, I cannot deny that.

That is the response we wanted, to turn heads, and if the price we have to pay is some people don't get what we were trying for, then I think we can all live with that. I mean, we're doing interviews in hipster magazines like *Law of Inertia* to try to clue people in.

So have you guys spearheaded a scene in Charlotte?

I don't want to take credit for that but when there's a band that does national tours and has the power to bring bands back home to our out of the way location, then you have to start crediting the change in the scene somewhere. And, yes, whether it's coincidence or not, the scene in Charlotte has gotten a whole lot better since we started making people notice us. We have gotten the opportunity to play with a lot of really good bands in Charlotte and the shows have grown as a result. When we started 50 kids would come out. Now, when we headline shows 400 kids show up.

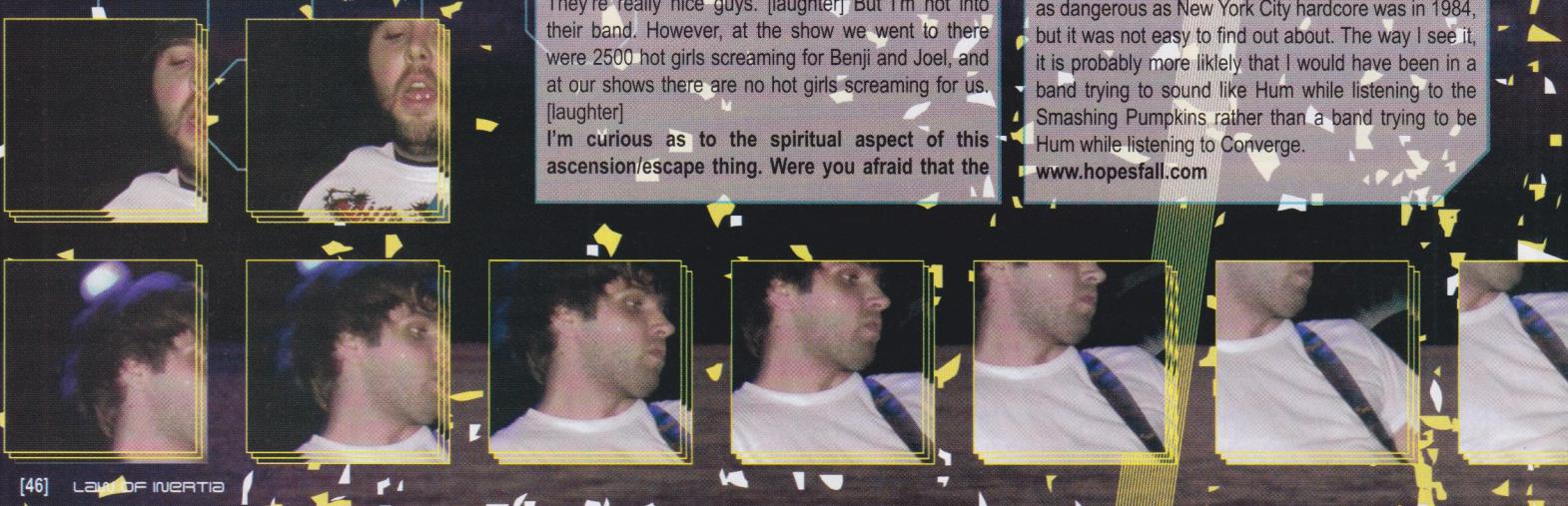
How did you get into hardcore and punk? It seems like there was no scene there before you.

Well, to be honest, we never really got into punk. I was into hardcore because after 1995 all the good, so-called alternative music was gone. There was less and less on the radio and MTV that I wanted to hear. You had to go find the good stuff and when someone played me Snapcase I loved it. For a while in Charlotte the only way you could find out about record labels that are huge now like Victory or Equal Vision was if you knew somebody who knew somebody who was into it.

This was before Hot Topic and Interpunk.com.

Kids today don't realize how accessible punk rock is nowadays. Today hardcore and punk is easy, and I don't mean to say that in 1995 in North Carolina it was as dangerous as New York City hardcore was in 1984, but it was not easy to find out about. The way I see it, it is probably more likely that I would have been in a band trying to sound like Hum while listening to the Smashing Pumpkins rather than a band trying to be Hum while listening to Converge.

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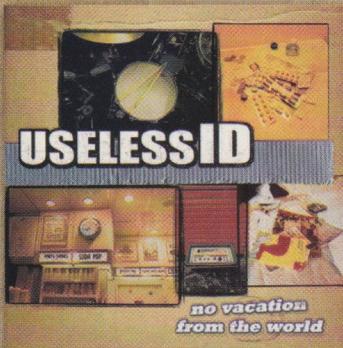
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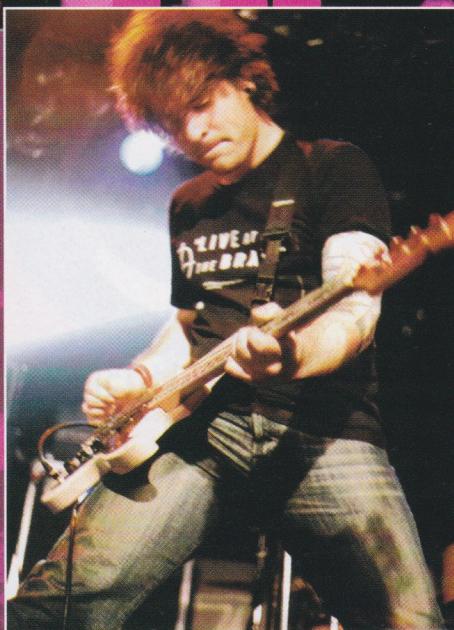
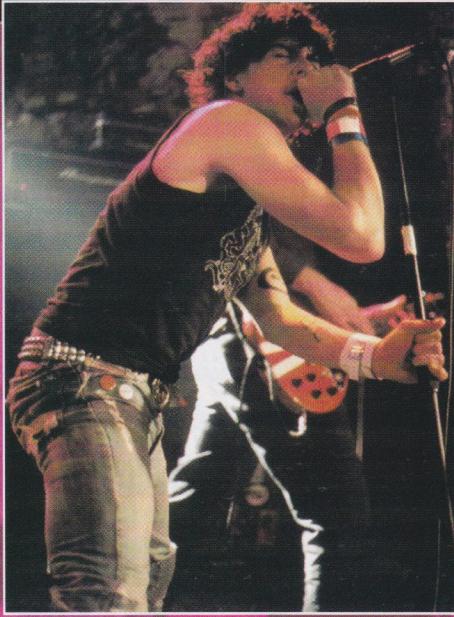
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Milwaukee, Wisconsin has been pumping out some amazing hardcore for quite some time now but the rest of the aggressive rock world has only recently started to notice. Bands like Forstella Ford, Seven Days of Samsara, and now Since By Man are making Milwaukee more than just the place where Laverne and Shirley once lived. The term hardcore does not even begin to explain the intensity, originality and passion Since by Man brings to everything they do— whether on record or on stage. You may not have heard of them at the time you read this, but if you are a fan of any American metal-based music, that is just a bit more authentic than Slipknot, then beware; Since By Man will rock your world.

After forming in 1999, releasing three independent releases (now out of print) on friends' labels and carrying out two full US tours, the band was signed to prominent hardcore label Revelation Records. A little less than a year later, SBM released their debut full-length, *We Sing The Body Electric*, this past February and plans to tour indefinitely from here on in. With their aggressive blend of metallic hardcore; an undeniably sassy attitude to accompany the sometimes screamy, sometimes melodic vocals; and a real sense of driving rock, Since By Man will be a band difficult to ignore.

I recently sat down with singer Sam Macon to discuss his main passion in life: music.

I've noticed that SBM seem to actually push a message and theme with your music and it's written out very well in the lyrics. They tend to focus more on social issues rather than specific situational concerns such as lyrics about personal love and loss, stuff most people have heard a zillion times over. The lyrics have real substance and tend to ask a lot of questions. What exactly is behind this?

I guess when I start to write lyrics, I start with the personal and then expand from there but I've never gotten much out of reading ultra-personalized, ultra-specific

lyrics about how so and so dumped so
and so. The personal tragedies and or-
cesses in life give me inspiration and
ction in my song writing, but I wouldn't
anything out of just writing a song about
this girl cheated on me, boo hoo, [and
I'm gonna talk about broken butterfly
s. I can't take that shit seriously when I
it so there is no way I'm going write it.
t think that a lot of people fail to make
ortant connections.

What type of connection are you referring to? There are different types of connections that can be made.

Individual to society? Individual to self? To scene, etc...?

I think the connection people fail to make is the connection between what's going on with themselves and how it relates to the rest of the world. Think of how many band's lyrics endlessly drone on and on about tragic lost loves, and broken selves. Ok, so maybe there is a reason for all this misery. Maybe it's because young people don't know how to interact with one another. So often sex is clumsy and talking is even worse, and that's shitty. I understand the desire to sing about this shit, but not without trying to get something more out of it. If all you want are sixteen year-old girls' sympathy and hand-jobs then keep whining, but if you care about the state of boys and girls getting along in this country then try to say something.

There definitely are more important and detailed issues being left out of many of the songs being written and sung in the indie scene. Like the difficulty of communication pre- or post-sex. There is an example of this scenario on the first song on your new album called "Push The Panic."

Yeah, well not everyone should want to write a song like "Push The Panic." That's fine. I think it's truthful and part fun, part sad. Many people I know are in these trainwreck relationships and I blame it on young people not knowing how to talk to one another. Basically, they don't know how to fuck either. I'm sure this is coming off sounding jaded but there is a lot of romantic stuff on the record as well.

On a slightly different note, track 4, "A Kid Who Tells On Another Kid Is A

"Dead Kid" seems more politically based. I don't want to make a vast assumption but the words "terror" and part of the chorus that follows, "People screaming from the skyscrapers, help, help!" seems like an allusion to the whole September 11th thing. The first time I heard it I automatically formed a visual of the media clips shown from that day's events.

I can hear what you are saying about the imagery but that isn't what the song is about at all. It's more just an action song about young people and the power we have and the importance of rebellion, whether or not there is anything to rebel against. Causing trouble, is that political? I hope so.

The concept of youth, more specifically of making change and being heard seems to be an underlying theme to all of your material from the last 7" on World Won't Listen, the split LP with Seven Days of Samsara, to this new album.

It's a constant theme as a band. Being in this band is like the last line of defense between us becoming "the people in the skyscrapers." It's not politics-type politics, but it's important to us. I think the content is there for those who choose to look for it. For people that look for more out of their music, I believe we have more. On the other hand, if you just have thirty minutes and all you want to do is see a band play then that's us too. We're just a band.

I think it would be quite difficult to watch you guys play and walk away from it thinking, "they are just a band." Your live performance always emits an unbelievable amount of emotion that eventually gets into and permeates the audience. How important is performing for you guys?

It's extremely important. Since By Man is a live band. Playing shows is when we get it together and give it our all. Live is when things get the hottest. I love the new record but it's really about playing the songs live. Speaking of the new record, the first thing that stood out when listening to it was how well the album flowed, not only the art, but also the music itself. The progress this new album expels will

only make it harder for people to categorize the band and that's a good thing. The music seems more steered away from the metallic hardcore feel and instead, is more rock and more punk. You can dance to it.

We took over a year to write *We Sing The Body Electric* and the whole time we were writing the songs, we were writing them as a whole and as a completed product with a start and an ending. We really set out to make an album not just a record with a bunch of songs on it. I hope we succeeded. As far as the writing steering one way or the other, we just

write and if something is good, we use it. I know we wanted it to be all over the place as long as we could keep things focused. This record was one of many firsts. It was the first record written with Bryan, our bassist, first with electronics, and first with more than 24 hours to record. A lot of things influenced the new sounds, but it still very much sounds like us. We allowed things to develop more fully. Kurt Ballou really helped. He is a musical genius, and he has a perverted sense of humor, so we got along really well.

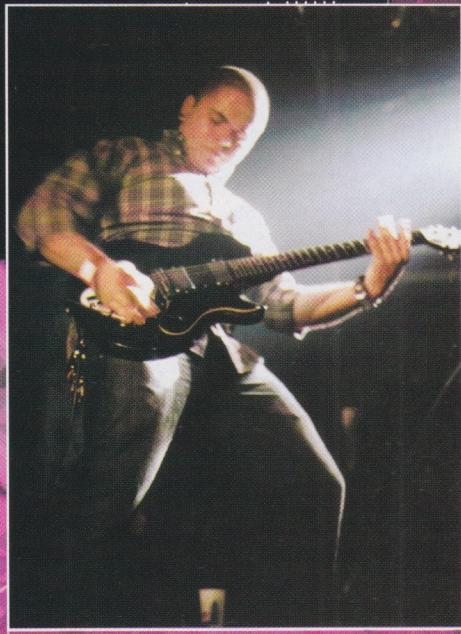
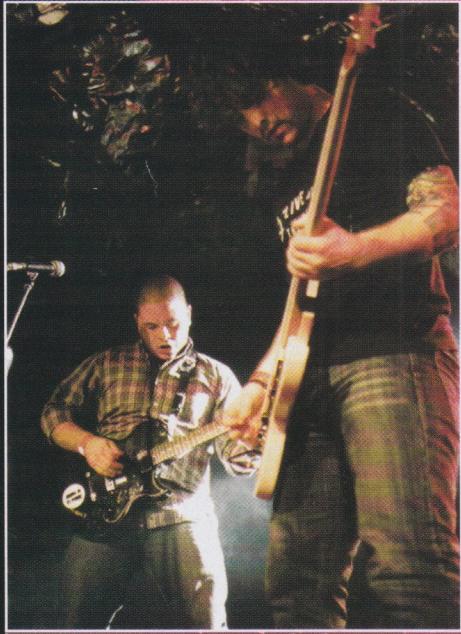
Who was responsible for the design of the album?

As with all Since By Man projects it was collectively done, give and take process. The design process was a huge thing for us and always has been. I think that the art is a crucial part of the record. The audio and the visual go hand in hand. For us, it's all art and it's what we have devoted our lives to creating.

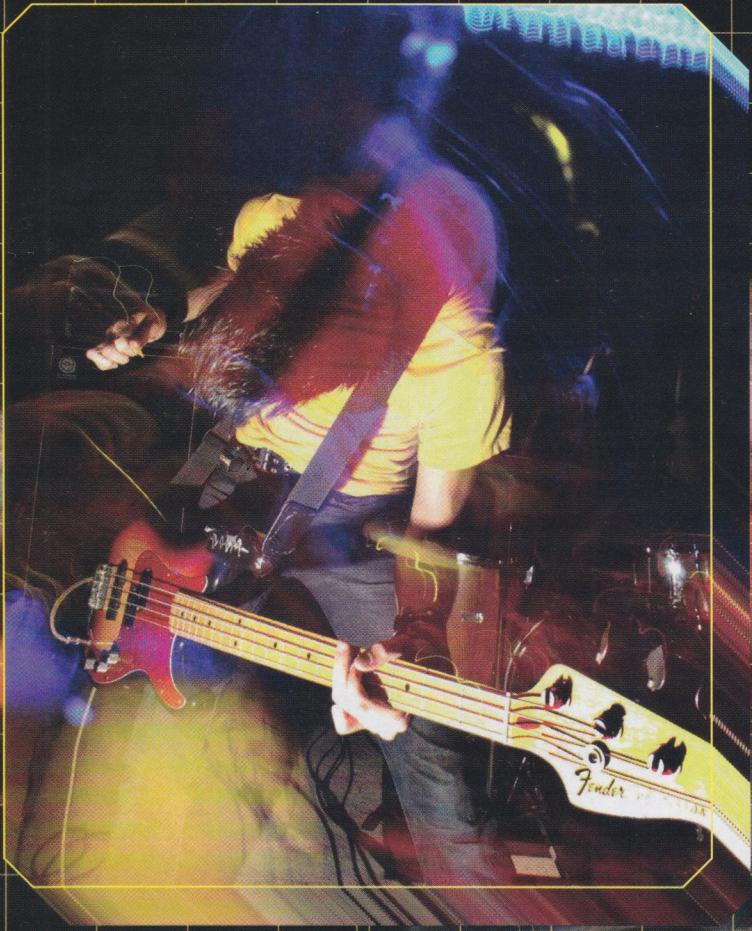
Every aspect of creating the art (music, layout, and performance) all goes hand in hand and are just as important as the next. You put everything you have into it and hope that it one day pays off.

Exactly. It pays off when you're in some strange town in some strange venue, be it a house, bar, club, anywhere and you know no one and within a minute of plugging in, there's this mass of bodies sweating and screaming and fucking freaking out. Well, you can't just cut that out of you. You can have a job and a house and all of that domesticated shit, but you can't shake that feeling. It's with you forever.

www.sincebyman.com



The Explosion



When Million Dollar Matt Hock screamed the call of "No Revolution" to a crowd hungrily waiting for AFI, I looked into his eyes and said to myself, "these guys are going to make it big." There was a reason their manager repeatedly suggested I see them play before I interviewed them. No matter how catchy and fist-pumping they are on their records, the mood they create in the space between your ears is nothing compared to seeing the band pull it together live.

Formed in 1998, The Explosion recently signed to Virgin Records—a move from their former label Jade Tree. While their catchy guitar melodies are similar to Rancid's—and Hock can do a mean impression of The Misfits's Glenn Danzig—this quintet does have their own distinctive signature of energetic oi-style punk. What other punk band would write a song the centers on menacing arachnids ("Tarantulas Attack"), then plaster these spiders all over their merchandise, guitar straps, and album covers? I was sad to hear Hock announce "The Local" as their last song for the night, but as they drove through the chorus with the line, "there are no proud Americans," I was right there with him, and that high took me all the way through AFI's set. I'm looking forward to seeing them headline their own tour and I have a feeling I won't be waiting long. The morning after their show at New York's Irving Plaza, I met with drummer Andrew Black and guitarists Dave Walsh and Sam Cave to discuss the implications of their signing to a major label and the fruitful beginnings of 2003.

Everyone looks pretty tired this morning. What did you guys do after the show last night?

AB: We stayed until 11:30, it wrapped up pretty quickly. Damian [bassist] DJ'd last night at this place called Adult World. Remember that movie *Less Than Zero*? It was like that. There were a bunch of douchebags there. It was fun though.

So do you wake up every morning and have to do stuff like that?

D: No, but seeing the band is more full time now it looks like we'll have to.

What do you mean the band is more full time?

A: Well, before I was living in DC. On top of an 8-hour commute for myself, Sam started doing a project called The Tonsils and the other guys started a record label called Tarantula. We wanted to keep doing it, but it wasn't going at the momentum [we hoped] because everyone was doing school too. It changed because, for me personally, it was a string of shows we did last August on the West Coast. We did a quick 5-day tour of the East Coast then went to the West Coast and it proved that no matter what rate we do it at we can still see our friends and play shows and have a lot of fun, so why not just keep doing it. It made me think I want to be in a band again. I quit my job, I quit school, and moved to Boston.

D: It was pretty much a year off because we had done the band full time prior to last year. That initial string of tours which lasted six months and we were like, "oh man," everyone kinda scattered and wanted to do school again. But when we did those two strings of shows on the East and West Coast we were all really really psyched about it

That's great. Before we get into discussing the move to Virgin and your upcoming EP, tell me more about your Tarantula label.

D: On April 22nd, *Sick of Modern Art* will come out on Tarantula, which is [a record label] equally owned by members of The Explosion and it's not tied to Virgin at all. The name of the label came from "Tarantulas Attack" on *Flash Flash Flash* and our group of friends is called The Tarantulas. Our first release was The Tonsils, Sam's other band. But initially we started the label with the idea of doing an Explosion record by ourselves. [We wanted to] see the project through from start to finish where we're in control of the artwork, the money, the music, the recording, everything. We did it all with the help of engineer Matt Squire who co-produced it with [us]. *Sick of Modern Art* was a really hands-on experience and that ties in to what Tarantula is.

So this EP is like the appetizer before the fall release.

D: Exactly. The concepts on the record are really strong so there's going to be a lot of substance there, even though it is an EP. The songs have energy and a message and the artwork and packaging is really neat. It's going to be a really substantial thing. It's about modern art and I think Damian put it best. We are sick of seeing the same kind of recycled modern art that is out there right now, but yet we can't stop doing it ourselves.

A: It's not taking a pot-shot at art, but there's a song on the EP called "Original Thought" which is the same idea, can people really think for themselves anymore?

So how does this DIY idea tie in to now being signed to Virgin?

D: It's pretty interesting, but it does tie in because we're going to be able to reach a larger audience now. It's something we're going to have to keep ourselves in check about and not just conform to what people want to hear but stay true. I think our music definitely has a sensibility that can be attainable to 15-year-old ears across America a million times over. It's got hooks in

it that draw people in. I just want for every fan of Avril Lavigne, who thinks she's a punk rocker because she's up there doing whatever, I'd like to actually reach those people and show them what it's all about and what a true expression of energy or art really is. She's not really talking about anything and there's not a real artistic expression there.

A: I think of using a major label as a tool, it's like a steamroller. If you have potent songs in a powerful band whoever you are and you put out small releases, those small releases will be like bullets and they will infiltrate small parts of subcultures. But if you are able to release that same message on a large scale, you are able to conquer so much more territory and do so much more damage.

D: So a major label is our own machine. Our eyes aren't blind to what a major label is. They're there to make money off of us. We have no delusions, but this allows the band to focus on exactly what we're trying to get out of our music and our expression. Which is something you can't get if you're working 40 hours a week and going to school and trying to support a family. I'm making a very modest living right now being signed to a major label but I don't have to work 40 hours a week which is very nice. I'm probably doing way more work than [at a normal job] but it's work that's relevant to our lives.

Sounds like a good symbiotic relationship, so far. You use a major label to get your point across and more of a following and they use you to make money.

D: Exactly. And at the same time, just outside of that, we're getting our label together too and that's a new passion of ours. Virgin knows of our label and they're supportive of it. Not financially supportive but that's fine with us. I'd rather use my own money for that.

What future plans does Tarantula have?

D: We had The Tonsils record come out first. That was a press of 500 LP's and we're going to repress that [on] CD and vinyl again. The initial artwork was designed by Ralph Steadman, who did Hunter S. Thompson's books. We are going to do The Faux, a really good band from Boston which will be out in the springtime. Darker My Love who are friends of ours from a band called the Nerve Agents. Andy from The Distillers plays drums for them. And The Bronx, a band from LA that are recording right now.

A: They rule.

Last night The Explosion dedicated songs to Sick of It All and the Bouncing Souls. Besides the obvious connection to the New York punk scene, what connection do you have with them?

D: We went on tour with them and we developed a really good friendship.

A: I feel almost honored that growing up seeing people like the Bouncing Souls and Sick of It All then suddenly having these people who you idolize, at least me personally, come up to you and tell you you played a great show it's like, "you rule!"

Speaking of idols, how did Joe Strummer's death affect you?

D: I'll tell you what, he was fucking amazing. We played a show with him, hung out with him, smoked pot with him. It was my dream. It was someone I had listened to since I was 12 years old and probably the reason I started playing guitar. [His death] just sucked. The worst thing about it was he was someone we had in mind to produce our record and I personally talked about it with every major label we went to. I was like, we know Joe Strummer, he likes our band, he'd probably do it. And then he died. I remember when my wife called and told me. It was brutal.

A: But that's the kind of passion, I don't want to sound cheesy, but growing up listening to punk and being involved in this community and this group of friends, that's what kind of emotion gets devoted when you lose someone. That's not the type of emotion that will get devoted when Britney Spears dies. When you feel that you identify with someone on an idea level, on a political level, and then all of a sudden that person isn't around anymore it's just dead and gone.

D: When we played with him he was the most genuine, down-to-earth guy. We were all done with the show and he was out in the parking lot talking to ten 15 year-old kids. He was sitting down and they were all sitting around him. It was like an outside classroom. Over the last couple years there's been so many people who've died. Dee Dee died. Even beyond [Joey Ramone and Joe Strummer] there's been Left Eye and Aaliyah and people like that.

A: Jam Master Jay. We were playing the Warsaw [in Brooklyn] the night he was shot.

On a less somber note, on *Flash Flash Flash* there are songs like "The Local" with the lyrics, "there are no proud Americans" Do you think that's changed?

Sam Cave: I think it's changed. In terms of being proud Americans there's a philosophy that if something makes you feel good about yourself then that's what it does and it's valid. In some ways it feels like the national pride and patriot aspect of things is a reaction to something, especially within the last year or two. When I see "Kill Bin Laden" t-shirts, to use a worst case scenario, that to me doesn't really make me proud of anything. It just shows me someone's angry.

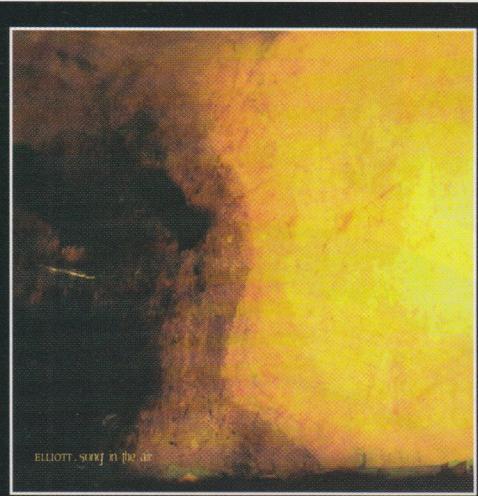
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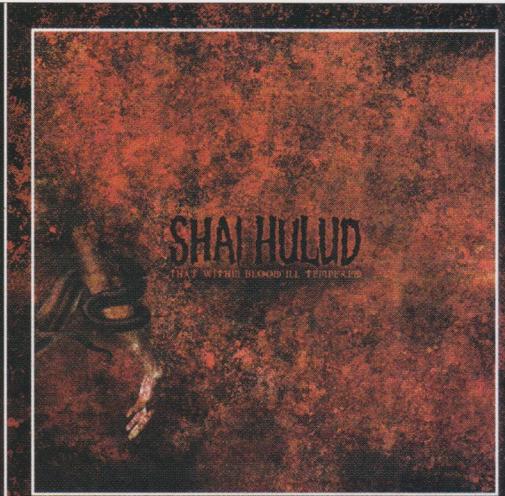
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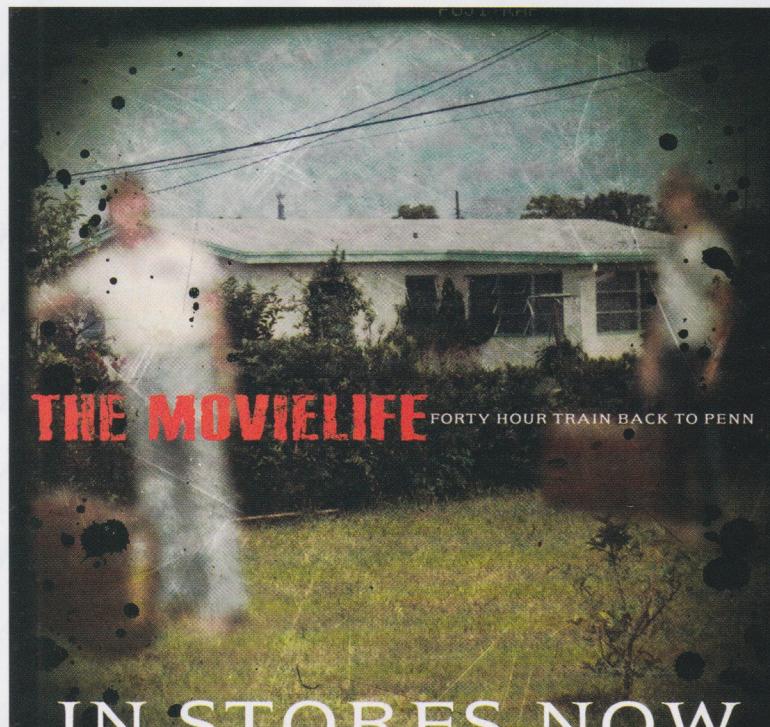


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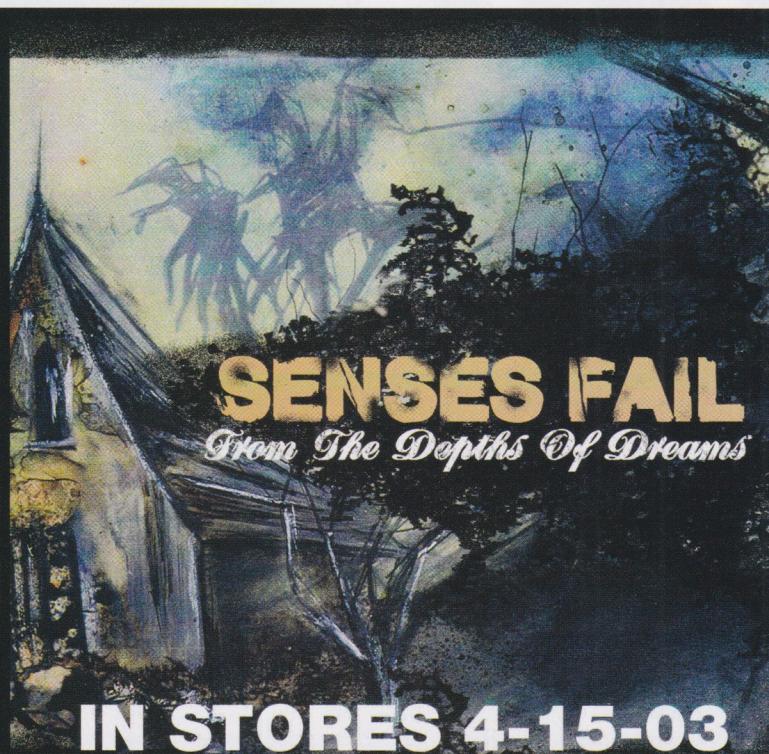


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Practically since their conception, Enon has been a band to watch out for. Breaking boundaries through the use of rock, electronics, weird tweaks, and danceable beats, this band truly shows a bold face in the evolution of pop rock and roll.

It all started in 1996 when Rick Lee met John Schmersal on tour when Lee was in Skeleton Key and Schmersal in Brainiac. The two shared mutual interests and eventually Schmersal moved to New York. That's when he started playing with Calhoon and Lee, at first separately but inevitably they played together making music with "no aim in particular." Though the band began to form songs from those intentionally directionless jam sessions, their non-committal status on having a specific sound stayed with them.

Enon released a couple 7's, an EP, and finally their debut full-length, *Believe!* on the See Thru Broadcasting label. The album received applause from press and newfound fans, garnering comparisons to Beck and Oliva Tremor Control. It was then that Matt Schulz, an old friend of Schmersal's, joined the group on drums after Calhoon left with Lee soon to follow. Shortly after, Toko Yasuda came aboard in charge of bass, vocals, and other sounds after leaving The Lapse. With Yasuda's addition to the band, her empathetic vocals added a new dimension to the Enon sound, this time creating comparisons from Blonde Redhead to Preston School of Industry. After a few more small releases, as well as an instrumental LP

called *On Hold*, they came out with *High Society* in 2002 on Touch and Go Records.

Enon is a very interesting band playing extremely unique and intelligent music. I found that they are also very nice people who love what they do and love to share their work with the world. Here is what singer/guitarist John Schmersal had to say.

Which is more important to you during recording: making sure elements of your live show come through, or being able to play elements of the record during the live show?

Neither, when making the record, the record is the most important thing. They are two different worlds and I think this band's never been worried about how songs get reinterpreted live or whether to perform certain songs at all. We feel like some songs are better translated in one's bedroom than standing in a live venue type setting. So those songs might never get played live or very much after they are recorded.

What was the strangest comparison you've heard about Enon?

We taste like wet buttery popcorn. No joke!

Did you name the band after Enon, Ohio?

No! Enon is named for the ancient fabled water land, it is Atlantis above ground with some hot water springs and fish with wings, the birds are on string, and the bees never sting, yo!

Is there a hierarchy in Enon, as you are the only

remaining founding member?

Normally there is a long-winded bureaucracy that everything must go through. First the queen of Enon needs to notarize it then it gets past on to the court, where it is deliberated over. If a decision is not reached, jesters are asked to come in to entertain the court. If the court is not responding to the jokes of either jester then the court is hung and the jury gets to decide in a separate trial the following week.

I heard that you guys are recording now, what exactly are you doing in the studio?

I'm not sure, but our label told us it was the only way to get the songs from our heads into the ears of others. I'm still skeptical though.

...Something about an instrumental record and some singles?

We are working on our third instrumental CD but, it's kind of on the back burner right now because of the new record. We have a few singles coming out in between now and the new full length. The first of which should be on Troublemaker Unlimited, followed by a remix single of "In This City."

Do you take any influences from other genres of music?

I think that's all anyone ever does. We don't think about that stuff direct or consciously though. Everything inspires everything else but, that's up to who? We don't really think about that stuff when we write a record those are questions people like y'all ask later when the record comes out.

www.enon.tv

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LOUIS POSEN of... HOPELESS RECORDS



Unlike many budding entrepreneurs who found record labels in hopes of eventually creating the next Vagrant, Epitaph, or Death Row Records of the world, Hopeless Records was founded on a dare. Indie video pioneer, Louis Posen, founded Hopeless Records on a dare from infamous anti-PC punks, Guttermouth. The band recorded a few songs and released a 7" on which the second song was called "Hopeless." Using money borrowed from his parents, his brother, and his brother's friends, Louis Posen founded a punk rock institution which has become synonymous with quality, sincerity, and fun.

Since 1993, Hopeless Records has released records from The Queers, Samiam, Atom and His Package, Thrice, Dillinger Four, Against All Authority, and more. On learning the music business, Posen says: "When the Guttermouth guys posed their challenge, I went to the store, bought a book on how to run a record label, and followed the book. The idea that Hopeless has become the label it has is totally because I listened to others and I only released stuff I truly loved. I wasn't some big-shot record executive or anything."

In a day and age in which many record labels in independent rock are selling their souls to the corporate behemoth in exchange for a nice chunk of change, Hopeless remains owned entirely by Posen and his initial partners, all of whose investments adds up to a few hundred dollars. "Honestly, we really haven't had many serious offers from major labels trying to buy us out. They know that we're pretty fiercely independent, and that we've managed to do just fine thus far into our time as a label. I don't foresee us ever selling Hopeless to a corporation."

What many people do not know about Posen is that he is visually disabled. "I am almost completely blind, although I have some ability to see contrast and shapes." Posen, a soft-spoken, friendly guy, was diagnosed with a rare eye disorder which a doctor suggested he remedy through an immediate operation. Had Posen walked out of the office that minute and gotten a second opinion, he never would have had the surgery done. However, at the doctor's insistence he had the surgery done that moment and lost his vision permanently.

Perhaps the empathy Posen gained from the loss of his vision has led to Sub City Records, the philanthropic arm of Hopeless. Sub City is a record label, just like its parent, but a portion of every Sub City release goes to the charity of the band's choice. "as of December 31, 2002, we've raised over \$250,000 for charity, which is pretty amazing considering we're a small label that obviously can't throw its finances around lightly."

For now, Hopeless Records will keep releasing the same great punk rock they're known for. Louis Posen will still be at the helm to pick the bands and guide the label for what will surely be a long time to come. ■

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THE TRANSFORMERS MOVIE

WORDS: DR. NOEL SHANKEL



Forget Citizen Kane, Orson Welles' performance as Unicron, the planet-eating Autobot-smashing, Transformer, remains unmatched in film history—a planet sized man playing a planet sized robot.

When most people think of Orson Welles, they think of his 1941 opus *Citizen Kane*, a film that revolutionized the industry and changed the face of film forever. However, when I think of Orson Welles, I think of Unicron, the transforming planet he voiced in the 1986 epic, *Transformers: The Movie*, an all out ball-busting, ass-kicking tribute to just how rad a cartoon can be. Many people, myself included, have wondered why this was Orson's last film. Some may say, "Well, dipshit, because he died shortly after filming was done." True, but I think there are reasons beyond that.

Orson was a larger-than-life figure in the world of film, yet, rarely did he work with anyone who could compare with his stature until he agreed to make this film which allowed him the opportunity to work with one of the greatest American actors of all time. . . Judd Nelson. A few years back, a "friend" of mine convinced me that Judd Nelson had died in a car crash. After three solid days of weeping like a little girl, I finally discovered that it was all a lie. Thank God. Perhaps Orson, too, felt that time was running out to work with this living legend.

Along with Judd Nelson, who voiced Hot Rod, Orson also got to work along side Robert Stack, Eric Idle, Leonard Nimoy and Scatman Crothers, the bald black dude from *The Shining*. Working with such an all-star cast could provoke an actor never to want to work again, under the belief that no other experience could ever compare. In light of this, Orson simply chose to die.

Acting talent aside, everyone knows that a film is nothing without a decent script to work from. Sure, stuffy film historians will wet their pants with the memory of Orson mumbling, "Rosebud," in the opening scene of *Kane*, but honestly, who really gives a fuck? *Transformers: The Movie* contains some of the most jaw-dropping, emotionally charged dialog ever captured on film, a fact of which I'm sure Orson was acutely aware.

For example, take the character of Grimlock, a transforming dinosaur who begins

every sentence with, "Me Grimlock..."
"Me Grimlock don't like you."

"Me Grimlock want to munch metal."
"Me Grimlock no bozo. Me King."

Writing talent like that is rare. Sure people praise David Mamet for his unique style, or Tennessee Williams for his timeless commentary, but do you think they really had the skill to come up with such riveting dialog as, "Me Grimlock say execute them?" Me Noel think no way. Me Noel think this is best script ever.

If Grimlock's words don't touch you on a personal level, then perhaps the soundtrack will, another reason why I believe Orson decided to make this his final curtain call. Among the songs featured are Weird Al Yankovic's "Dare To Be Stupid," a timeless masterpiece that captures the political struggles of North Korea in 1986, and Stan Bush's "The Touch," made famous again in Paul Thomas Anderson's 1999 porn biopic *Boogie Nights*. I'm telling you, when "The Touch" kicks in during the opening battle scene as Optimus Prime transforms, mid-air mind you, and blasts useless Decepticons out of the way left and right, I had to wipe a tear from my eye. And when the chosen one rises up from the ranks towards the end of the film to light the Autobots darkest hour, and "The Touch" kicks in again, I had to wipe a tear from my other eye. Why Mr. Bush doesn't have an Oscar on his mantle, I don't know.

In the end though, I think Orson agreed to make this his last film because he knew exactly what it was: 86 minutes of ass-kicking carnage. Again, some may argue that he just simply died, or that he only did it for the money.

Bullshit. Others may say that since Orson turned into such a fat-ass towards the end of his life that playing an entire planet was the only role he could relate to anymore. Fuck that. Orson's last film was *Transformers: The Movie* because that's how life works: It always saves the best for last. Orson, you truly were more than meets the eye. □



WARNING
Don't get too pumped about the bonus features of the DVD. I was hoping for an in-depth interview with Judd Nelson, or perhaps one with Orson Welles from beyond the grave. Instead, it's twenty minutes of Vince DiCola, the film's composer, rambling on and on about his so-called "legions of fans." Too bad his only other claim to fame was composing the soundtrack to *Rocky 4*. Fan-fucking-tastic! In a nutshell, he bonus features suck donkey balls.

Yes, it was tragic when the space shuttle Challenger blew up, but perhaps the darkest hour of the 1980's: The Death of Optimus Prime!



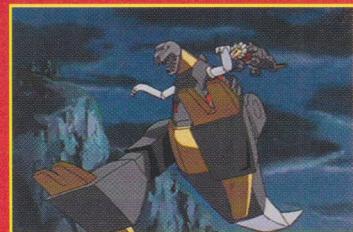
Optimus Prime kicks ass...



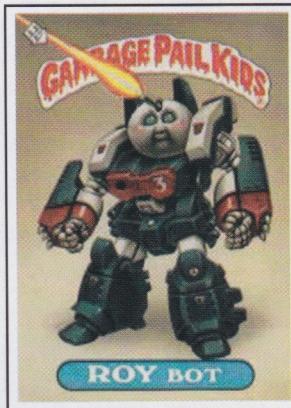
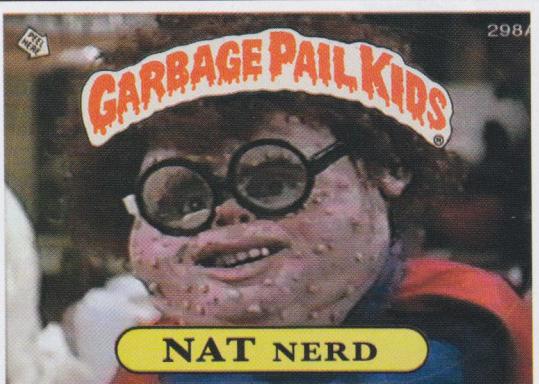
Optimus Prime goes down...



Small child mourns his death...



Grimlock continues to kick ass!



Have you ever been walking down the street and seen someone that has made you think to yourself, "Thank fucking God I don't look like that!" Perhaps you're tired of sharing the already crowded streets with the handicapped, the elderly, or the mentally retarded. If only there was some way to keep all of the unattractive people of the world out of sight so you could live your life in peace. If you've ever had these thoughts, congratulations, you are a shallow, superficial piece of shit. This does not mean, however, that no hope for your salvation. Enter *The Garbage Pail Kids Movie* which deals with these issues in an intelligent and coherent fashion.

Now, I know what you may be thinking. "Didn't that movie come out almost two decades ago?" Sure, but it only spent about an hour and a half in the theaters, so unfortunately not a lot of people had the opportunity to explore the depths of this emotionally-charged masterpiece. Some may argue I use the word "masterpiece" here too loosely, but how else can one describe a film of this caliber?

Sure, the production values are a little on the cheap side. The editing is poor, the acting is terrible, and the dialog sounds like it was written by a drunk fifth grader, but hey, the film sets out to make a point about the importance of inner beauty, and that should not go over-looked.

For those of you not old enough to remember those disgusting sticker/trading cards, perhaps these names will stir up some long forgotten memories: Nat Nerd, Valerie Vomit, Ali Gator, Greaser Greg, Messy Tessie, Foul Phil, and Windy Winston. Just hearing those names brings back such fond memories. This is one of the best ensemble casts of all time. Forget *The Hours*, fuck *Glen Garry Glen Ross*, and that piece of trash *Magnolia* can burn in hell for all I care. If a movie doesn't include Valerie Vomit, I have no interest in watching.

The issue at hand in *The Garbage Pail Kids Movie* is a simple one: Just because you look like a disgusting little piece of shit on the outside, doesn't mean that you're a bad person on the inside. The GPKs are continuously being put down during the course of the film because they look different, but hey, they've all got hearts of gold.

For example, when Greaser Greg threatens to slit the throat of a movie patron if she doesn't cough up her hotdog, I felt the kindness of his spirit leaping out from the screen. Or when Ali Gator bites off the toe of a biker dude just trying to enjoy a beer at his local bar, I understood where he was coming from. Sure, Windy Winston may fart on everyone he sees, but he's just saying hello. And just because Valerie Vomit pukes on you that doesn't mean she, too, can't love.

Really, it's the human characters in the film that are the true assholes. Take Tangerine, an 18 year-old wanna-be fashion designer involved in a scandalous transgenerational love triangle. She's hot, I guess by 1980's neon wardrobe and perm-ed-hair standards, but she's a real superficial bitch on the inside. She wouldn't even shake Messy Tessie's hand just because it was covered in snot.

She's dating Juice, the town bully who looks like he's pushing 40, while stringing along 12 year-old Dodger, the gayest looking magician of all time. The plot of the movie loosely revolves around Dodger's futile attempts to win Tangerine's heart where he enlists the help of the GPKs to raid a non-union sweatshop and steal some materials to make some clothes for Tangerine's fashion show, but things of course go horribly awry.

The entire time, Dodger's mentor, Captain Manzini, an antique storeowner who is also an ambiguously gay magician, tries to come up with a spell to send the GPKs back inside their garbage can from space because he's afraid the "normal" people of the world will never accept them. Never mind how it was his fault to keep the GPKs garbage can in his store just waiting to get tipped over. But without a careless Captain Manzini, we have no slime spewing garbage can for the GPKs to emerge out of and no way to get this emotional roller coaster of a movie going.

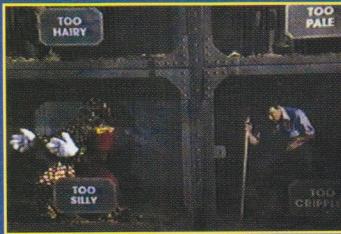
Perhaps the most shocking part of this movie comes not from the plot, but the brief appearance of the State Home For The Ugly, a prison-like institution where all of the socially unacceptable people of the world are held and eventually killed by being tossed into the back of a dump truck. Late in the film, we get a glimpse inside the State Home For The Ugly and see who is deemed socially unacceptable. There is one guy who's too old, one who's too bald, and another who's too crippled. Obviously, those are not people who belong in a functioning society, but when they lock up the GPKs for being too gross, that's where I draw the line.

In the end, however, everything wraps up nicely. Sure, not all of the GPKs survive The State Home For The Ugly, but who cares. Dodger finally realizes that Tangerine isn't that rad of a chick when her fashion show backfires, and Juice gets his ass kicked not only by Dodger, but by Dodger's much taller 35 year-old stunt double. As for Captain Manzini, he tries one more time to send the GPK's back into their garbage can, but fails. And thank God for that, too. What the world really needs are more children who smell like shit, piss their pants, threaten innocent people with switchblades, play their ass like a musical instrument, whine all the time, vomit on people, and consume human body parts. But perhaps that's just my superficial side talking. □

Who cares about offensive social commentary, poor production, and shoddy fight scenes when you have a gay magician to save the day...



The GPKs are sent to the State Home for the Ugly for being "too gross."



There, they meet others who have been deemed socially unacceptable.



Intent on saving the day, Dodger frees the GPKs and kicks the crap out of a 40 year-old man twice his size....



...all in a day's work for a gay magician!



THE ELECTRIC LIGHT TRANSFORMER HOLOGRAM

March 4th, 1986 was the best day of my life. It was the day my mother told me we were going to the shoe store after school and I could pick out any pair I wanted.

"Anything?" I asked with disbelief, wondering if I was actually going to get the Pro-Keds I had desperately wanted ever since seeing them on TV for the first time a week earlier.

"Anything," she replied flatly.

"Even the Electric Light Kangaroo Pouch Transformer Hologram Pro-Keds?"

"Yes honey," she replied, having no clue of the monstrosity she was about to purchase.

"But I can just imagine my precious little boy, hobbled at the age of ten, because of some ridiculous shoe," she muttered.

After school, I had to sit through an entire episode of Duck Tales I'd already seen four times, asking my mother every 5 minutes when we'd be leaving for the store. Pretty soon, it started getting dark outside and I was worried the store had already closed.

Finally, it got to be too much for me to handle. I turned off the TV and yanked my mom away from her TV in the kitchen and out the door. She just had time to slip her hand back inside and grab her purse before the door swung shut. When we got into the car, she fumbled with the keys for a little while, then found the right one. She inserted it, turned the ignition, waited for the engine to come to life, but

nothing happened. She wiggled the key, pounded the dashboard, and said some words I wasn't supposed to hear.

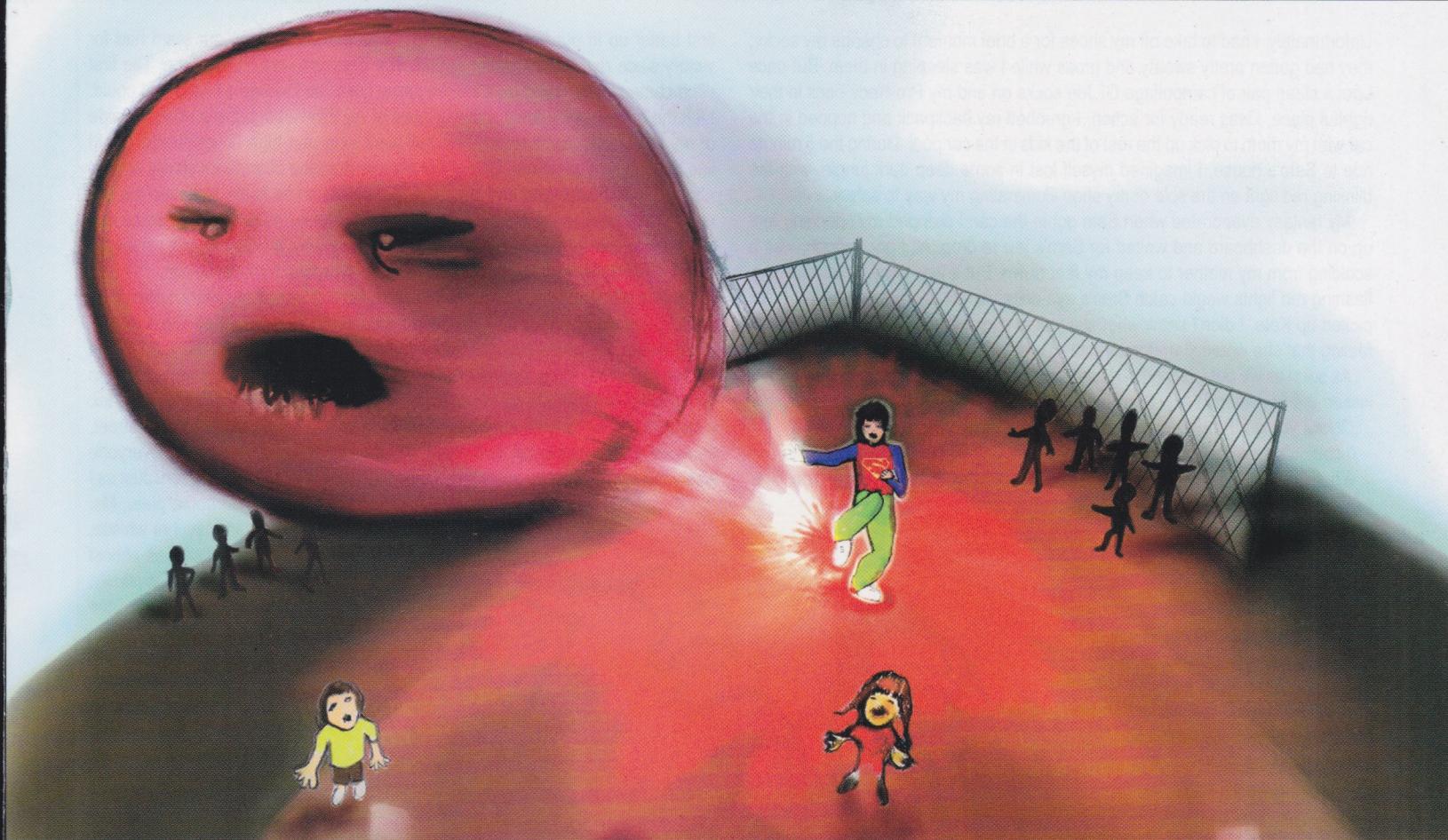
"Oh, its not in 'park,'" she said, her face flushed, and her hair spilling down in front of her eyes.

I had no idea what "park" was, but at least we were moving.

The car ride was an excruciating race against the clock. I didn't think it was possible to drive any slower than we did. At every stop sign, we would wait for what seemed like a couple of hours for every car in sight to pass through the intersection. Then we would slowly inch forward. A couple of times she had to slam on the brakes for some reason unknown to me, but every time her foot hit the brakes, her arm would come shooting out to keep me from flying through the windshield. It didn't seem to matter that I was already wearing my seat belt.

At five forty-five, our beat-up old station wagon pulled into a parking spot among the sea of other cars. I had my seat belt off and the door opened before the car even came to a complete stop. I leapt out and raced top speed across the parking lot towards the big letter K in the sky, my old beat up Keds clomping along on the pavement. I couldn't help thinking how much faster I would be able to run once I got my new shoes. Mom also bolted at the sight of her small child dodging cars in the parking lot. She could barely keep up with me with her Birkenstocks flopping off her feet and assorted junk pouring out from the top of her purse.

Once I arrived outside the doors of the department store, I was momentarily



KANGAROO POUCH PRO-KEDS

enticed by the 25¢ rocking rocket ship ride, as all seven year old boys are, but I shook off the temptation to pop in a quarter and shimmy myself into drooling euphoria and proceeded onward with my mission. No silly distraction was going to stop me. I flung open the doors, knocking over three shopping carts in the process.

I added my own peeling out sound effect and dashed into the store, looking for the sign with the picture of a shoe on it. The shoe department was way in the back so I had to weave through big packs of people. But I did it well, making three or four people spin around and wonder what that little flash was racing past their feet.

Once I got to the huge wall of shoes, I grabbed a salesman by his pant leg and dragged him over to the shoes I wanted.

"Pro Keds. Size seven because I'm seven," I instructed the dazed salesman.

By the time my mother arrived at the shoe department, I already had the new shoes on my feet. We made our way to the register, where she opened her checkbook with a groan, and paid for the shoes.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you! You're the bestest mom in the whole world!" I exclaimed, really meaning it this time.

As my mom and I were getting ready to leave the store, the salesman scurried out from behind the register with my dirty old Keds.

"I don't think you want to just leave these here little guy. I still remember my first

pair of Keds, best pair of shoes I ever had."

I stuffed my dingy old shoes into the shiny decorated box with a big Pro-Keds logo as I walked toward the exit. The shopping carts still lay strewn about where I had knocked them over. My shoes squeaked on the polished linoleum floors, the little red lights flashing from my sole every time I set my foot down. I wanted everyone to stop and take notice.

When we got home, I had to run laps around the house to test out my new shoes. I was definitely twice as fast than with my old ones. I couldn't wait to show them off at school the next day. All of this excitement made me pretty tired so I got ready for bed early that night. I brushed my teeth and put on my PJs. I threw my old Keds into the closet and hopped in my bed with my Pro-Keds still on. I loved them so much I just couldn't bear to take them off.

The next day, March 5th, was even better.

I woke up just as the grey light of dawn was coming in my bedroom, jumped out of my race car bed, and ran into the kitchen for breakfast. After eating my daily bowl of Frosted Honey Smacks, I felt the sugar pump through my veins and up to my head, where it made the whomp whomp whomp feeling I loved so much. After stumbling around the house for a while on a sugar high, my head finally cleared enough to realize I needed to get dressed for school. I picked out my favorite lime green sweat pants and matched them with my blue and red Superman T-shirt.

Unfortunately, I had to take off my shoes for a brief moment to change my socks; they had gotten pretty sweaty and gross while I was sleeping in them. But once I got a clean pair of camouflage GI Joe socks on and my Pro-Keds back in their rightful place, I was ready for action. I grabbed my backpack and hopped in the car with my mom to pick up the rest of the kids in the car pool. During the 5 minute ride to Sam's house, I imagined myself lost in some deep dark jungle, with the blinking red light on the sole of my shoe illuminating my way to safety.

My fantasy evaporated when Sam got in the car. I propped my sparkling feet up on the dashboard and waited for Sam's jaw to drop. All I got, though, was a scolding from my mother to keep my feet down. But it was okay, I was sure the flashing red lights would catch Sam's eye once we got out of the car. When we picked up Kate, I didn't know what she would think of my Pro-Keds, but I had a feeling that she wouldn't understand their greatness.

As soon as we got to school, I dashed out of the car, my shoes flashing as they kissed the pavement. I saw Sam's eyes get wide and his mouth hang open.

"Wow, you got Pro-Keds!" he proclaimed in a high pitched squeal.

I couldn't even respond, the grin on my face was so big.

That day, my teacher Ms. Stewart read us a book about a giving tree. The tree gave a lot of neat stuff to the boy, I thought, but it didn't give anything as cool as my Pro-Keds. During art class I drew pictures of myself racing in the Olympics, playing basketball in the NBA, and jumping as high as planes in the sky - all with the help of my new shoes.

When recess came, it was my big moment to show off my shoes. A whole bunch of kids gathered around me, prodding my feet, giggling and squealing every time the shoes lit up or the hologram moved. Sally even gave me her favorite lucky charm, a bronze medallion with a picture of a leprechaun, to put in the kangaroo pouch on the side of my shoe. When she wasn't looking, I had to take it out and put it in my pocket because it dug into my foot when I walked.

The daily kickball game started and teams were being picked. I was never very good at this game, but I announced that Pro-Keds were specially designed for kickball. The other kids on the field seemed to buy it and I was picked first.

That day, the kickball game was especially good, maybe one of the best ever. It was tied 14 to 14 going into the last inning. The other team was up with the bases loaded. Tony was the batter and he was the best player in the whole school. He pointed to the fence, smiled, and scratched the dirt with his foot like a bull ready to charge. The pitcher rolled the ball in and Tony sent it skyrocketing toward the fence in left field. I was playing right field because I wasn't too good at catching, and most kids didn't kick the ball into right field. But as soon as the ball was kicked, I knew I could catch it with the help of my Pro-Keds. I took off running as fast as I could toward the left field fence. As I ran, I imagined making a diving catch and crashing full speed into the fence. It might hurt, but would be well worth the glory. I ran all the way across the field, dodging motionless kids as they stared at the ball soaring through the air. I got to the fence just in time to leap into the air, stretch my arms out as far as they could go... and see Sam catch the ball easily against his body.

"Uh, nice catch," I sputtered, picking myself off the dirt, still trying to catch my breath.

I couldn't get too disappointed about not making the catch because I was the

first batter up in our half of the inning. I was the last chance our team had for victory since recess was about to end. The pressure was on, big time. The first pitch came slowly rolling in, it looked pretty good, so I kicked as hard as I could. I felt the ball meet squarely with the laces of my Pro-Keds, but slip off to the side of my foot at the last second. The ball went long and high down the right field line but finally hooked foul. One of the players from the other team slowly walked after it, trying to stall and end the game in a tie. When he finally retrieved the ball and rolled it back to the pitcher, I could see Ms. Stewart looking at her watch and reaching for her whistle. The last pitch was on its way, a bouncer, but I knew if I timed it just right, I could smack it out of the playground for a home run.

I took a step back and charged for the ball, kicking with all my might. I struck the squishy ball dead center and felt it wrap around my foot. It shot off like a rocket, and I swear the whole playground turned red for a second from the L.E.D. light on the sole of my shoe. I watched the ball ascend into the sky, and waited for it to come down. But it didn't want to do that. The ball just kept going higher and higher. It cleared the fence with ease and kept on going. It finally landed in the street, bounced off a passing car and rolled into the McDonald's parking lot. Everyone was dead silent with awe as I slowly circled the bases for the winning run. Just as I

touched home plate, Ms. Stewart blew her whistle. The situation was almost too perfect. Obviously, my Pro-Keds were the cause.

Afternoon classes seemed to drag on endlessly compared to the excitement on the playground. To make matters worse, once I got into class and calmed down, I looked down at my new best friends and couldn't believe my eyes. I saw a big brown dirt spot in the middle of my right shoe and a stitch that was coming out. I quickly licked my hand and rubbed out the spot, but when I went to pull out the string, the whole stitching came undone along the side of the shoe. I almost wet my

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pants right there in my seat. Instead, I lost control of my body for a minute and my right leg jerked upward, slamming into my desk. The whole classroom went silent and looked at me. I turned so red that the teacher asked if something was wrong. I said I was OK, I just needed a drink of water. I went out into the hall and paced up and down. My world was shattered. My precious Pro-Keds had been damaged. They had sacrificed themselves valiantly on the playground, but had paid the price.

After about fifteen minutes out in the hall, examining the tear on my right shoe from every angle, debating what to do, I decided that maybe the tear wasn't so bad, that my Pro-Keds were too great to be stopped by an insignificant blemish. I strode back into class with as much confidence as I could muster, but every time I lifted my foot, the tear would open up to make a little hole where I could see my GI Joe sock peeking through. But it was too late to do anything. I was already back in the classroom.

In the middle of math class, I heard a "psst" come from behind me. I knew what it meant, so I slowly reached my hand back, keeping my body as still as possible so Ms. Stewart wouldn't see. I held my hand back there for a while, but nothing happened. I think Tony was jealous of my new shoes and my home run today, and now was his chance to get back at me. Finally he handed over a small note, making sure to smear his big sweaty palm across mine. I slowly opened the note under my desk and darted my eyes down to find out who it was from. As soon



as I saw the messy capital letters, I knew it was from Sam. Tony was just the messenger.

COLUMBUS STREET HILL. FROM THE TOP.

SAM

I folded up the note, looked at Sam, and smiled. I had to smile, I couldn't show him how terrified I felt inside. I still had faith in my Pro-Keds, but wasn't sure if they could stand up to the challenge, or if I could for that matter.

The Columbus Street Hill had always been a legend for local kids in our neighborhood with Big Wheels. It was the steepest, windiest, scariest road in the whole town. It was a test of courage, of bravery, of rubber soles and plastic wheels against concrete.

After school Sam, Kate, and I waited to be picked up by the car pool. Sam and I talked endlessly about the hill, all the bumps and curves of the road, and the precise tactics it would take to navigate safely to the bottom. Kate waited impatiently for her father to arrive so she could escape this boy talk, making sure to tell us exactly how stupid it all sounded.

Sam got dropped off first and told me I should meet him at his house as soon as I could. When my stop came, I had already closed the door and was running up the driveway before Kate's dad could even say good-bye. I said hi to my mother on the way to the garage and bye on the way out the door, towing my Night Rider Big Wheels behind me.

"Where do you think you're going?"

"Oh, just over to Sam's house," I said in my most innocent voice.

"Now don't get into trouble," she replied, "Heaven forbid, I don't want to pick you up at the hospital."

I rolled my eyes as far as they could go and stepped out the door.

In a flash, I was knocking on Sam's front door, pacing back and forth waiting for an answer. My heart sank when he came out with a sheepish look on his face.

"My dad said I have to do my homework before we can go out."

That was the worst thing I could have heard, but I bowed my head and came inside. It was torture for me to sit and watch Sam chew his pencil and ponder the deeper meaning of first grade math. But being 7 years old and in first grade, there wasn't much to ponder and his homework didn't take too long.

After this brief delay, Columbus St. stood waiting for us. It was a long, hard climb to the top, but whenever I got scared, I just looked down at my Pro-Keds for reassurance. They were still super and all, but that little tear seemed much bigger now.

Once at the top, we reached the point of no return. We straddled the huge plastic front wheel of our trikes, wrapped our finger around the handle bars, released the emergency brake, sat down, and began our descent.

It didn't take long to reach top speed. The roar of our plastic wheels on the concrete was deafening, the wind in our eyes made us cry. I was doing great, easing into each corner, controlling my speed by lightly touching my foot to the ground.

Sam on the other hand, wasn't doing so well. The handlebars on his trike were loose and he was having trouble staying in control. On one super-steep hairpin turn, he finally lost it, skidding off to the side of the road, hitting the curb,

and sprawling through the air until he finally crashed-landed in the soft grass of someone's front yard.

Watching all of this happen from the corner of my eye, I almost lost it myself. Just as I was about to hit the curb and get sent airborne as well, I lowered my right foot to the pavement and felt the super sticky rubber of my Pro-Keds grip the concrete and pull me back on course. I looked down for a second to thank my Pro-Keds and saw that the small tear from this afternoon had grown the entire length of the shoe. The whole top section of my right shoe flapped wildly in the wind and threatened to fly off at any moment.

The final straight-away was all that was left of the Columbus Street hill, so there was nothing else to do but try to forget about my shoe and go for it. I came whizzing down from the hill top speed and flew by the playground, waving heroically to my friends

It did not take long for the thrill of victory to fade as I saw an intersection up ahead with a bunch of cars driving through it. I slammed my Pro-Keds to the concrete with all my might. The smell of burning rubber filled my nose but the intersection kept on getting closer. My feet began to get really hot and started to hurt on the bottoms, so much that I couldn't press down any more. In a complete and total panic, I reached down to my right and yanked on the plastic lever that was supposed to be an emergency brake.

It clamped down on the right wheel, locking it up. This sent my bike spinning in circles.

I watched the world go round many, many times, but somehow came to a stop just before the intersection. I did it! I had made it down the Columbus Street hill! I stood up to receive the standing ovation from the playground. But when I stood up, I couldn't figure out why the ground felt so funny. Maybe, I thought, it was from all the vibrations or something. When I looked down, I couldn't figure out where the soles of my Pro-Keds had gone. Then it hit me like a punch in the stomach. The soles of my shoes had totally disintegrated on the way down the hill. I was torn between the joy of success and the incomprehension of what had just happened to my precious new shoes.

Before I could figure everything out, Sam came running from around the corner, dragging his trike behind him and holding one of the wheels in his hand. Any mixed emotions were instantly forgotten.

"You made it!" he screamed with joy.

I ran over to him and we hugged and danced in the street.

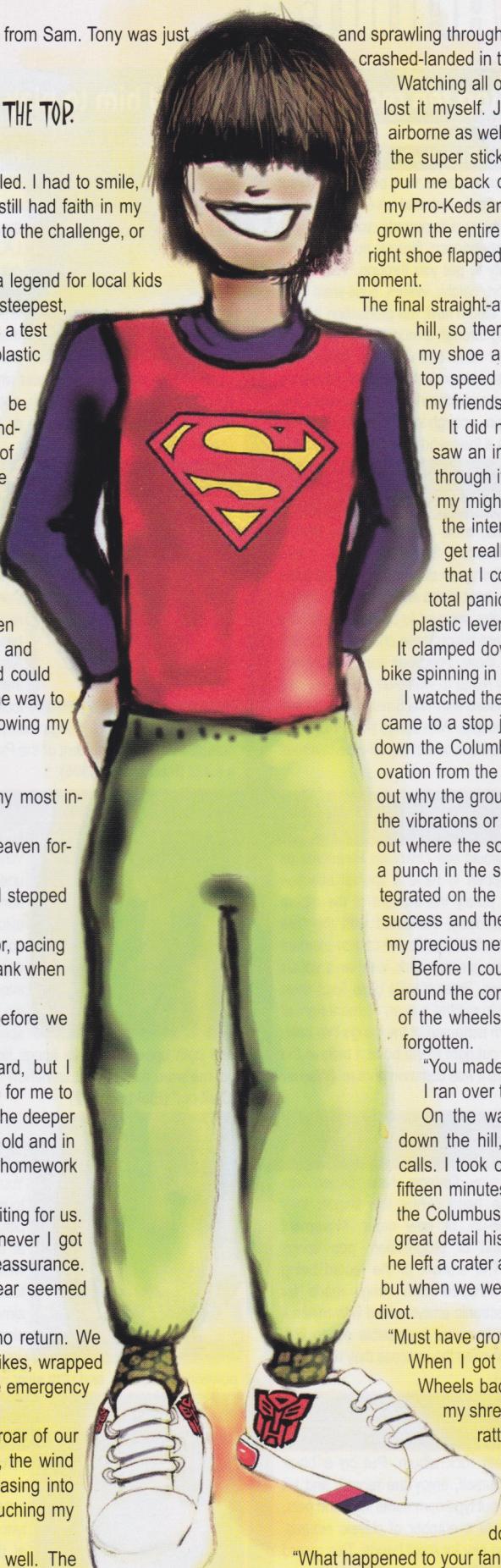
On the walk back home, we talked about our adventure down the hill, reliving all the exhilarating moments and close calls. I took off my shoes and we examined them for at least fifteen minutes. The now shredded shoes were a testament to the Columbus Street Hill, a trophy of sorts. Sam described with great detail his flight through the air and ensuing crash. He said he left a crater at least a foot deep in the ground where he landed, but when we went back the next day, nothing was there but a little divot.

"Must have grown back already," was all he could say.

When I got home I slipped into the garage and put my Big Wheels back in its place. I tiptoed into my room and took off my shredded Pro-Keds. I fished around in my closet for my ratty old Keds and found them way down in the back corner under a pile of dirty clothes. I slipped them on and they welcomed my feet like an old friend. I walked out into the living room and plopped down on the sofa.

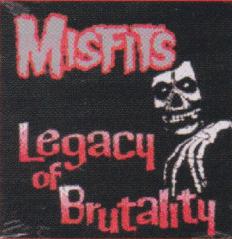
"What happened to your fancy new shoes?" my mother asked.

"Oh, I don't know, I think they were a little too fancy. Pretty soon, everyone's going to be wearing them anyway," I said, smiling the pure, glorious smile of a seven year old with everything right in his world. □



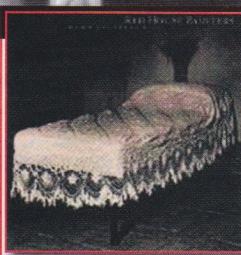
HILL YOUR RADIO: 1

Jeff of Starflyer 59 reviews the top ten records that inspired him to play music....



The Misfits "Legacy of Brutality"

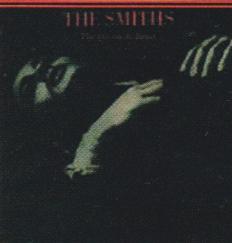
Though the record was released well before my junior high ears found it, it is firmly included on my top-ten list. Faced with puberty, fighting with parents, youthful angst, and the search for independence, there is no finer album than *Legacy of Brutality* to get you through. The record is jam packed with short, catchy, violent, cuss-word filled gems! Listening to the album now, the production is sick, as if they ran everything through a muddy filter. However, at the time there could have been nothing better. The pure idea of them having a song titled "Angelfuck" was enough to top out the rebellious fourteen-year-old scale for me. Chorus lines like, "I ain't no goddam son of a bitch, you better think about it baby," [from "Where Eagles Dare] were enough to drive me insane with teenage joy. I must have listened to these thirteen tracks a thousand times. (Plan 9: 1985)



Red House Painters "Down Colorful Hill"

Though this is really a six-song EP, it clocks in as an album. My first awareness of the band was chance, as the opening act for Pale Saints at the Roxy Theater in LA. I immediately loved them, and was overjoyed to find out their first release was coming out on 4AD. I waited patiently for months to get this. When my special order arrived, I was not disappointed. The music being slower than a snail's pace only helped to drag out the drama of Mark's immensely personal lyrics. This was the first time

I had felt so attached to a band since The Smiths. They almost seemed to build these songs around the major seventh, and if you have lost a girlfriend, have problems with family relations, or are struggling with an addiction, then there is no better record to relate to. (4AD: 1990)



The Smiths "The Queen is Dead"

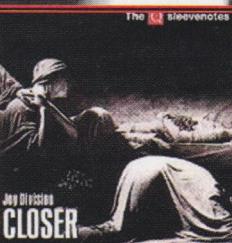
Early on in high school, while living off of the Misfits, Aggression, Social Distortion, Sex Pistols, etc., I was introduced to The Smiths by an extremely quiet kid (who would later become my best friend and bandmate, Jason Martin.) While The Smiths seemed to oppose everything I liked (angst ridden, hard hitting three chord rock music) I couldn't help but like them. Infectious songs and lyrics seemed to immediately relate to whatever situation I was in. I soon became obsessed with The Smiths, giving them the honor of being to me what The Beatles are to most people. With songs like "I Know It's Over," and "There is a Light that Never Goes Out," the record is one of my all-time favorites even today. (Sire: 1986)



Compulsion "Comforter"

Around the time that everyone was making such a hubbub about Nirvana's *Nevermind*, a friend called me and said he found a new record that was 10 times better than *Nevermind*. I, of course, picked up the *Compulsion* record, and then quickly agreed with him. The record had been a double major label debut, first on Elektra and then Atlantic, and the band had one appearance on SNL, and then disappeared. I view this as one of the greatest overlooked albums of all time. The album is twelve tracks

of incredibly tight rock songs mixed with two beautiful Pixies-ish instrumentals and one beautiful ballad reminiscent of the Psychedelic Furs. I encourage anyone to get this album a.s.a.p! (Interscope: 1995)



Joy Division "Closer"

While most everyone would site *Unknown Pleasures* as their Joy D pick, I happen to have a special affection for *Closer*. Maybe it's purely the thought of the album being released posthumously, combined with the "pre-resurrection Christ" artwork that adds the creepy element to the record. The music is crazy dark, with Ian's vocals yearning for better things. Peter Hook's bass lines drive the songs, allowing Ian to put the human element right at the front. Lyrics like, "I'm ashamed of the things I've been put though, I am ashamed of the person I am isolation," cut right to the bone. I believe the band was practicing in the true genre of "emo" years before it was common phrase. (Warner Bros.: 1980)



The Pixies "Come on Pilgrim"

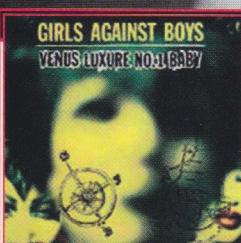
While this hardly counts as a full length, its relevance is undeniable. The band crafted incredibly off-kilter catchy songs. Joey Santiago's guitar licks seem personally tailored to your ears, while Black Francis's squealing vocals draw you in even more. Essentially, the band's dynamic was so out there that one couldn't help but be interested. The Pixies were more or less out of place on the 4AD label, but even they knew they had something special on their hands. Even though they also flirted

with both upbeat and silly songs like "Vamos" and "Nimrods Son," the songs that truly got me were the fast, yet somehow still melancholy numbers like "The Holiday Song" and "Caribou." (Elektra: 1992)



New Order "Movement"

After the demise of Joy Division, New Order was born out of the same band minus the singer; they had a literal new line-up, or new order. Movement for me was the sound of progression; pop songs with a dark element. The artwork of the record being so minimal, and the stripped-down songs made for a true classic. Early electronic arrays mixed with minimal guitars and great bass lines are impossible not to like. Amazingly, the band achieved the success they have with such an unconventional sound. (Warner Brothers: 1981)



Girls Against Boys "Venus Luxure No. 1 Baby"

You want rock 'n roll? This is it! While on an early SF 59 tour, GvB seemed to be playing everywhere we were playing, but always a day behind us. Upon our arrival at a Virginia show I was crazy excited to find out we were opening for them (this is still one of my fondest tour moments.) We had been listening to this record almost nonstop, and hearing them replicate their kick-ass elements live was incredible! Eleven tracks of every song you wish you had written, complete with dirty licks, overpowering bass licks, and ultra sexy vocals. (Touch & Go: 1993)



The Cure "Pornography"

The quintessential death rock album. Put on a black jacket, feel sorry for yourself, enjoy the record, and kill yourself. For all the sell-out type comments the band gets, they have turned in quite a number of classic albums, which is more than I can say for most bands. This record is incredible. (Elektra: 1982)

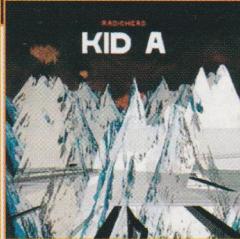


Cursive "Domestica"

What can I say? Angst-filled songs for the mature listener? At times, some of the actual playing seems to be a bit off, but that only adds to the album's mysterious quality. Their lyrics are so harsh that I find myself cringing and agreeing at the same time. It's just a great record, period. (Saddle-Creek: 2000)

HILL YOUR RADIO: 2

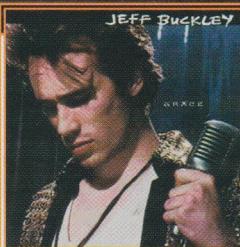
Keith of Every Time I Die reviews his favorite 10 records of all time....



Radiohead "Kid A"

This album is absolutely mandatory for anyone who wants to feel like a heroin addict without spending more than two fistfuls of quarters. Imagine a recording device so sensitive and precise that you could actually hear billions of years into the past through the vast expanses of space. Presume, even further, that you could record the song that God was humming while he fashioned the blueprints of our galaxies. Now set up another tape recorder somewhere in the laboratory (we're assuming

you're a scientist or a magician), play that song backwards (the one in God's head that I just mentioned), and, on another listening device (e.g. a cassette player), play the tape you had previously made which consists of you dry humping a cello when you were on all the heroin you bought for those two aforementioned fistfuls of quarters. When you listen to the original tape, it will sound like the fourth song on the Ace Of Base 1993 release *The Sign*. But *Kid A* is a good album too. (Capitol: 2000)



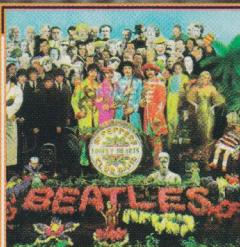
Jeff Buckley "Grace"

If someone were to tell me that I were to be marooned on a deserted island with a discman and only one CD, and I had to chose which CD that would be, I would, without delay, opt for an instructional CD on how to build a speedboat out of bird shit and bark. If they were to tell me that such a CD did not exist, and I was forced to choose another, it would undoubtedly be Jeff Buckley's *Grace*. I don't even know how to make jokes about this recording. But that won't stop me from trying. Q: What do you do when you are on the cusp of creating the most ingenious collaboration of musical talents on the planet, which will stand the test of time and leave an indelible print on every guitarist/vocalist that feebly tries to imitate it for decades to follow? A: drown. (Columbia: 1994)



Journey "Greatest Hits"

Remember the rumor that circulated a few years back concerning the song order of Pink Floyd's *The Wall* and its uncanny correlation to the storyline progression of *The Wizard of Oz*? Apparently, if you begin the album at a certain point in the opening credits, it would appear as if not only David Gilmour's lyrics, but [also] the instruments themselves were reflected in the action on the screen. I adamantly believe that if someone in the near future writes a movie about a cocaine-addicted bar league softball superstar, one will eventually discover that same phenomenon coexisting between it and Journey's *Greatest Hits*. (Sony: 1988)



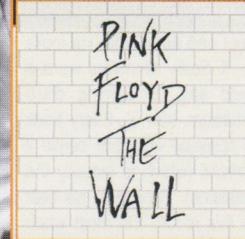
The Beatles "Sergeant Peppers..."

Yes, this album came out almost a decade before I was born, and yes, I once had scabies. That was years later, however, and frankly I fail to see the correlation between the two. This album encapsulates for me the first few years of my childhood when my father would eat an entire sheet of acid every Tuesday night that he bought from our 17 year-old neighbor and reiterate ardently each time that this album was the "Instruction Manual for piloting the 'U.S.S. TrippyVisual' into the frothing carnation of selfless desire." He was right. (Capitol: 1967)



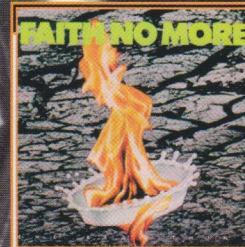
Sigur Ros "Agætis Byrjun"

Do you recall the last time you were so doped up on scopolamine that you held the population of an entire country emotionally hostage by singing inexplicably garbled vernacular in a voice reserved only for dolphins? No? They do. The creatures that make this kind of music should be kept in a "Musical Creature Museum" and preserved for future generations to appreciate. The cover of the album is an angel with an umbilical cord attached to it. It's probably because the music contained therein is similar to those chords that oscillate through our beings when we are in the womb, existing simply as vibration receptors, before an understanding of language begins and thusly the corruption of our purity. Or, it's a great CD to fuck angels to. (Pias America: 2001)



Pink Floyd "The Wall"

If you've ever wanted to not feel good about anything you've ever done in your life, take drugs and listen to this CD. (Capitol: 1979)



Faith No More "The Real Thing"

This was the first cassette tape I ever bought with my own money. However, Fresh Prince's *He's the D.J., I'm the Rapper* was the first cassette tape I bought with my parents' money a week earlier. Obviously, you can begin to see the development of a distinct taste in music here. Mike Patton's frenzied vocal pattern is indistinguishable from my panicked trane of thought the first time my second cousin showed me a joint in his bedroom while he played air guitar to "Epic", wearing a motorcycle helmet with two iron horns sprouting from the top. That dude was in a demolition derby at the county fair a few years ago, but I haven't heard from him in about a decade. Faith No More slays. (Warner Bros.: 1989)



Pantera "Vulgar Display of Power"

I was only 13 years old when this CD came out, but by the end of "Walk," I was the only thirteen year-old with a beard. I don't know how it happened so quickly, but my life was altered in a similar magnitude with every song that followed. I had knocked up my future high school sweetheart by the end of "Fucking Hostile", and towards the middle of "This Love" we were married. 47 seconds into "Rise" we were divorced on account of my penchant for drinking copious amounts of Mr. Boston's whiskey while roofing and when the first notes of "Live in a Hole" rang out I was doing hard time for pushing someone's face into a bonfire. Pantera makes me feel like it's okay to turn out like my uncles. (Atlantic: 1992)

No
Artwork
Available

Christopher Burke "Eating Is Fun, Eating Is Serious"

You may recognize Christopher Burke as the young actor who played the loveable and difficult-not-to-laugh-at-even-when-he's-crying mentally handicapped teenager named Corky Thatchier on the television show *Life Goes On*. What most people don't know about him, however, is that he did not simply act as if he suffered from the traumatic disability of Down Syndrome, he was actually diagnosed with the illness outside of the film studio. Now that's dedication! Aside from being the most thorough method actor in television history, the lyrics of Christopher Burke strike a chord with anyone who has, at one point or another, neglected the importance of eating. And his voice is so good it's retarded.



Johnny Cash "Complete Live at San Quentin"

It's difficult to pick the best Johnny Cash album, but I think the fact that this album has most of my favorite songs on it is why I chose it above others. Johnny Cash is America. God, whiskey, women and blues. When you have opted to relinquish faith in anyone but yourself, when you are disheartened, disillusioned, bereaved, woeful and lonely, put on this album. Because right from the beginning of "Big River," Johnny Cash will remind you, in the jet black banshee crooning he has made his trademark, that you are a completely worthless pussy. Instead of lamenting, you could be burying the end of a Smith and Wesson 629 Classic DX revolver in the gut of your nemesis and pulling the trigger. Every song should just be titled, "I am Johnny Fucking Cash," and the title of this album should be, "Did I Mention I Am Playing From a Maximum Security Prison?" and then in parentheses "You Are Shit." But that's exactly why you listen to him. Because at that point, at 2 am on a Monday night, when your cigarettes are gone but your glass is full, you know that's the truth. Revel in it. This CD is the best drinking buddy you could ever have. (Sony: 1969)

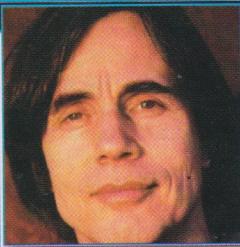
KILL YOUR RADIO: 3

Mark Mallman reviews his top ten favorite records....



David Bowie "Scary Monsters"

Bowie is a sexy bastard, cruel and desperate. He looks like a fool in drag, though. If *Scary Monsters* were a newspaper headline it would say, "Screaming disco ball explodes in a sushi restaurant, kills 5". Every track is fucking stellar. The Ryko reissue is better 'cause it has some sweet bonus tracks (which is actually the case with all three Bowie reissues). Fripp is in his best period as well. I listened to this record the most when I was houseless in 1996, just moved from Seattle to Minneapolis, living out of a car. I could have found a place quicker if I wasn't spending my unemployment checks on strippers and porn. *Scary Monsters* captures this whole period in my life. I would put *Outside* second on my Bowie faves as well, I don't give a shit if people say it sucks—they're all bastards. (Virgin: 1980)



Jackson Browne

Okay, so a lot of my favorite albums I've bought in second-hand stores for less than 3 bucks. This one came on a cassette, doubled with the self-titled. It was 50 cents that grabbed my pride and said "dude, Jackson Browne is your new overlord". I was always a fan of *Lawyers in Love* but a little bit too snobby to let my guard down on this guy. Isn't it always the case that the shit you once made fun of, someday becomes your favorite thing? A couple months ago my band was on our way to New York,

I was driving through Chicago at four in the morning. While everyone slept in the back of the van, I thought about the woman who doesn't love me anymore in that town, and cried to "Love Needs a Heart". God bless that genius for writing the tune, God damn that sissy for making me cry.

Magazine "Play"



I walked into this second-hand/punk rock shop, The Cat's Meow, in Madison, Wisconsin, and they were playing the vinyl [version of this record]. "Holy Shit", I thought, "this is my soul" — piano, monophonic synth, fretless bass, and the brooding vibrato of one Howard Devoto: "It's so hot in here, what are they trying to hatch? We must not be frail, we must watch". Devoto, my hero. Surrealism and cynical, bleeding nihilism. Years later, in *Luxuria*, Devoto penned one of my favorite lyrics of all time..."and now I'm running up the aisle of an endless train, and when I try and sleep I dream the very same. I am nothing becoming nothing." I found that one on CD for 99 cents in 1992! (Virgin: 1980)



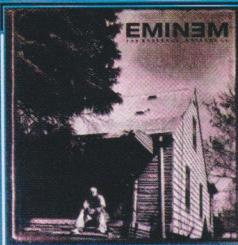
Violent Femmes "Violent Femmes"

In high school, I got 3 tremendous things from my friend Dug: his ex-girlfriend (what a knockout), a cassette dub of this record, and a porno tape that I can't talk about. So-called alternative radio has made it hard for me to tolerate "Blister in the Sun," so, I always start at "Kiss Off." I had a 1979 Mustang that didn't go over fifty, smoke came up through the stick shift, and it only had one speaker in the middle of the dash. But it did have a cassette deck, we'd drive around Milwaukee with this record blasting all treble and throw shit out of the window. "I don't come from Chicago, I don't know no Aaaal Capone!" Jennifer, if you're reading this... call me. (Rhino: 1982)



Brian Eno "Music for Films"

Sparrowfall trilogy will haunt my coffin. I tried to get into John Cage, but it was always too academic for me. *Music For Films* (of which there are 3) offered me the ability to see 'sounds' as music— truly ambient. Many rock heroes take a quiet residences of subtle/miniature/lunar: Robert Fripp, Fred Frith, John Cale, Phil Collins (yes, Phil Collins!). Call me crazy but this album sounds best on cassette. My warbly used copy fluttered from the speakers into the many dark make-out sessions and water color paintings of art school midnights. (Eg/Caroline: 1975)



Eminem "The Marshall Mathers LP"

I was looking for an Alice Cooper album to put on this list, but this made more sense. Whenever I listen to this record I feel very violent, hateful. When I was a kid I used to stay up and watch monster movies ever since I can remember. Then I would lie awake all night afraid of the dark, afraid of closets, afraid of the insides of walls. Eminem makes me afraid of myself— because I love the hooks, because I identify. These songs let me lose sight for a minute of dangerous words like "values" and "morals". I love singing along with this once a year or so, then I love putting it away— then I say "Fuck Eminem". Then about a year later I start the whole process over. (Interscope: 1999)



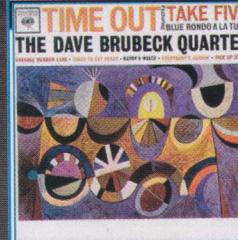
Sinead O'Connor "The Lion and The Cobra"

I bought this on cassette for 25 cents at a Goodwill thrift store in 1992. It's worth at least 50 cents! Time and fashion have done a pretty good job of stripping the dignity from the production values— gated reverbs, ugly drum machines, no bottom. I hadn't listened to *The Lion And The Cobra* in about 6 years 'til a couple weeks ago, when I was going to have the band cover "Mandika." I hit play, and sang along from cover to cover. I hadn't forgotten a single lyric in 6 years! One hot looking bald chick as well. I've never dated a bald chick, I'd like to do that someday, only for a while though, then she'd have two choices: "either grow your hair back, or it's out on the street again!" But she'd probably dump me first anyways and I'd spend the rest of the year pining in a coffee shop somewhere writing senseless poetry bullshit. (Capitol: 1987)



John Cale "Fragments of a Rainy Season"

This is another live/greatest hits kind of record (see also Magazine's *Play*). I always thought Lou Reed was the Velvet Underground mastermind, but sometimes I wonder. Cause if you notice, I didn't put any Lou Reed records on my list. Cale's records sometimes get bogged down with ugly production, and it's hard to see the vision clearly. "Fragments" is John solo on piano, and 12-string— very simple. The lyrics shine. The man screeches, and at one point slams on his piano in a heroic mess and fistfuls of sounotes. The last time I saw him live he was wearing a hot pink ski vest, Hawaiian print shorts, and teal tennis shoes— he looked like an aging Pet Shop Boy in a CHIPS reunion movie. I laughed...and then I cheered! (Hannibal: 1992)



Dave Brubeck Quartet "Time Out"

Everything I learned about Jazz I learned from friends of mine or television. At 16 I studied jazz piano at the Milwaukee Conservatory of Music— and don't remember anything. A few years ago I was in a club in St. Paul, MN and I watched this dude listening to a quartet real tight and focused— he looked just pissed. I could tell right away what he was doing. He was being an analyst, reducing the music down to technique, making it into sports. I never want to be pissed at music. I put this album on my list because it's non-obscure, mainstream, easy, something that guy in the bar would scoff at. I feel sorry for people like him. (Sony: 1959)



Laura Nyro and Labelle "Gonna Take a Miracle"

My friend Kate and I argue whether this should be a Labelle record instead of Laura Nyro. I guess the more I think about it, I could give a shit either way. This collection of classic R&B covers is flawless. Ron Baker and Jim Helmer are an astounding rhythm section. The arrangements never stray too deep into the "Nyro zone" which I've always found striking, yet rather obtuse. If you're a fan of simplicity and clarity— this album is the shit. (Sony: 1971)

KILL YOUR RADIO: 4

Eric of Ultimate Fakbook reviews his favorite 10 records of all time....



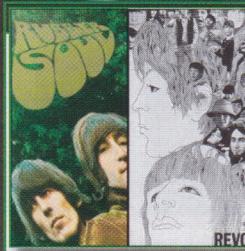
KISS "Alive!"

Somewhere in the middle of a smoking version of "100,000 Years" on Side Three of the greatest live album of all time, Kiss lead singer Paul Stanley screams to a sold out crowd of 12,000 teenagers that if they believe in rock n' roll, they need to "stand up for what you believe in!" It's at that point you realize that up until then, they had actually been sitting down! Audiences weren't used to standing on their chairs and screaming at the top of their lungs back in the early '70's, and they certainly weren't used to seeing a bunch of freaks wearing costumes and makeup, spitting blood and breathing fire. Kiss invented stadium rock, and this concert shows them at the top of their game, still a young and hungry group of New Yorkers who'll stop at nothing to put on a white-hot rockshow. This classic album opens with the now-famous boast "You wanted the best and you got 'em—the hottest band in the land—Kiss!" Then it lives up to it. (Polygram: 1975)



The Flying Burrito Brothers "The Gilded Palace..."

If you scratch the last track off this record, you have a perfect album. The great thing is that I always simply stop after track 10, and, voila, there you have it, perfect! Seriously, this is the first and best country-rock album, hands down. If you are a fan of any of the new wave of "no depression" artists that learned everything they know from Uncle Tupelo, then you should check this out and see where it came from. Although the production is a little bit dated, the songs are absolutely not. Almost every original on here has been covered by somebody huge since then, and soul classics like "Do Right Woman" and "Dark End of the Street" are given the high tenor treatment. I never go on the road without a copy of this in the CD wallet. (Edsel: 1969)



The Beatles "Rubber Soul" and "Revolver"

These are the two records that led up to Sgt. Pepper, and, although I think the latter is a phenomenal record, I prefer these just a bit more. The Beatles were certainly morphing into something crazier, and *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver* catch them smack dab in the middle of an intensely creative period. Songs like "Tomorrow Never Knows" and "She Said She Said" have blaring electric guitars and backwards tape effects, while "Girl" and "In My Life" are some of the best quieter numbers Lennon and McCartney ever wrote. And George Harrison's freaky guitar lick on "And Your Bird Can Sing"? Forget about it, I could go on all day. (Capitol: 1965, 1966)



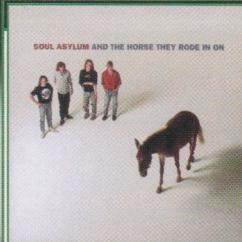
Dinosaur Jr. "You're Living All Over Me"

Man, I spent a lot of late nights playing air guitar to this one. This wasn't the first Dino Jr. record I had ever heard, though. *You're Living All Over Me* is a sludgy, mopey hard rock masterpiece full of fuzzed-out guitars and maxed-out levels. J Mascis' lazy vocals somehow work real well with the aggression in the guitar playing. It was a pretty big eye opener as I had never heard anything like it before. One minute I'm screaming along with the vocals and the next I'm just swimming around in the heaviest rock this side of Sabbath and Zeppelin. Mascis also made it okay to solo your ass off on that damn guitar, and he made it sing for all the losers. (SST: 1987)



Guided by Voices "Bee Thousand"

Robert Pollard really kicked me in the nuts with this release. But it was a slow, deliberate kick. I wanted to count *Bee Thousand* out for its crap production. I think most of it was recorded on an 8-track machine in a basement. It doesn't matter where something is recorded, however, when the ideas and songs are this good. Here, Guided by Voices established their own little world, a universe of robots who get gold stars, hardcore UFO's, hot freaks, and one who kicks elves. Some songs are less than a minute, and towards the end of the record, they seem to all run together. The thread that holds them all together is that most elusive of things; the insanely catchy pop hook. And Pollard and Co. have them in spades on *Bee Thousand*. (Matador: 1994)



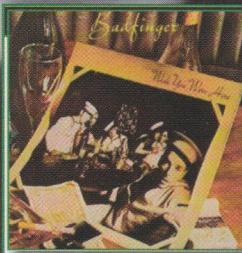
Soul Asylum "And The Horse They Rode In On"

In high school I was your typical long-haired metal kid, growing out of Whitesnake and into Slayer. Then, all of a sudden came this band. They rocked hard, but didn't play [stereotypical] metal guitar, ya know what I mean? The songs were loud and fast, but they had a strong sense of melody too. Hell, all I knew is I was sitting in front of the TV set watching *120 Minutes*, banging my head and singing along. Seeing Soul Asylum live is really what sold me on the band. They have lots of fantastic stuff, but none of the albums are consistent with the energy of a live SA show. Knowing that, *And the Horse They Rode In On* is still a powerhouse of a record. (Uni/A&M: 1990)



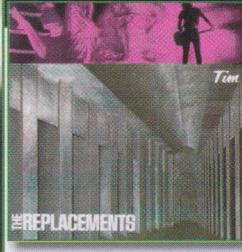
The Beach Boys "Pet Sounds"

Every Top 10 list you see has this album on it, and for good reason. Singer/songwriter Brian Wilson had been inching away from writing surf songs slowly and gradually since the inception of the band, but while the Beach Boys were on tour without him, he made the most radical departure ever. Nobody was prepared for the huge wall of sound created by an orchestra, a standard rhythm combo, and stacks and stacks of vocals. Like most people my age, it took a while for me to figure out there was more to the Beach Boys than "Fun Fun Fun" and "I Get Around." When I heard this it was like a lightning bolt through my skull. It is absolutely the most beautiful pop record ever. (Capitol: 1966)



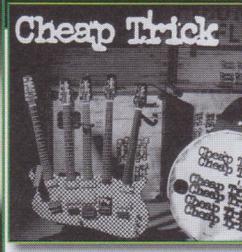
Badfinger "Wish You Were Here"

What a pity, first of all, that Badfinger's sad personal history sometimes overshadows the music, and second, that nobody heard this classic slab of wax when it came out (the record was pulled from the shelves weeks after its release). On *Wish You Were Here* everything came together. The songs are all first-rate and finally the production is up to the standards it needed to be. The strength of Pete Ham and Tom Evans is that they could never write a false lyric or melody. You can hear it in the way they sing. The songs are full of hope, but sometimes deep despair. Listen to Pete's innocent vocal delivery on "Dennis." I've been a Badfinger fan for a long time, and it took me a while to really let this record sink in. It's sad to think about what could've been for these guys. (WEA International: 1974)



The Replacements "Tim"

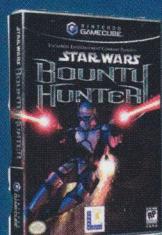
I knew I liked The Replacements when I bought this record, but after listening to it a hundred times in a row, I realized I loved this band. I think "Bastards of Young" has got to be one of the most brilliant "disaffected youth" songs ever. Paul Westerberg's heartbreak lyrics are all over *Tim*, and they really haven't been matched by anyone since. Especially this line: "The ones who love us best are the ones we'll lay to rest/Visit their graves on holidays at best/The ones who love us least are the ones we'll die to please/if it's any consolation, I don't begin to understand now." The Replacements seemed to sum up a lot of shit I was feeling at the time I got *Tim*, and still to this day, the songs ring true. (Warner Bros: 1985)



Cheap Trick "Cheap Trick"

Cheap Trick's truly great songs are spread out through so many albums, so it was hard for me to choose just one as my favorite. But since I had to, here ya go. No, it doesn't have "Surrender," but it does set the template for all the good Cheap Trick songs that came later. Equal parts twisted and heavy, poppy and pretty, Cheap Trick didn't fit in anywhere in the '70's. They weren't punk rock, and they were too weird for radio. And they made all the top bands of the day sound tame and safe. As soon as I heard this record after seeing them live, it completely changed my opinion of them. I mean, normal bands don't sing songs that are by turns funny and cynical about things like serial killers and pedophiles. But these guys did. They also have some of the best power pop hooks this side of fucking Earth. (Sony: 1977)

STAR WARS

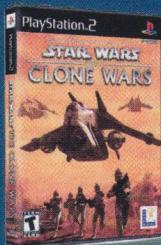


Star Wars: Bounty Hunter (Lucas Arts)- Star Wars games are supposed to be hit and miss, and Bounty Hunter could not be more off-target. Whoever designed this game should have a bounty put out on their head because the *only* people who might get any enjoyment in playing it are the complete and total Fett family fanatics. The levels are tedious, the controls confusing, and the whole "finding bounties" part of the game suffers from one fatal flaw, see if you can figure out what it is in this transcript from the manual (HINT: It comes near the end...).

"Scanning for Bounties: A large part of Jango's job in the game is to find certain bounties. In order to ID these bounties, use Jango's ID scanner. The scanner can be selected on the weapon menu. Press the <- or -> directional buttons (or the o button) to cycle through weapons and select the ID scanner. Quick select the scanner with the (up) directional button. To use the scanner, press and hold down the look mode button (R2 button). Once the scanner is in use press the left analog stick to point the cross hairs. Press the right analog stick up or down to zoom in on a character. The scanner will provide information on whether a bounty is posted.

Note: You are unable to fire or move Jango while the ID scanner is activated."

Reviewers Note: Do not, under any circumstances, play this game.



Star Wars: Clone Wars (Lucas Arts)- Episode I was one of the worst movies ever made. A confusing story line, stiffer than stone acting, a remarkably annoying performance by the completely untalented Jake Lloyd, and Jar-Jar Binks hasn't even been mentioned. Episode II was a minor improvement but was still bogged down by the laugh out loud funny romance between Anakin Skywalker and Queen Amidala. It was only in the last 30 minutes where it reminded anyone of why they liked these movies in the first place.

Clone Wars, the video game, picks up at the tail end of Episode II and plunks you down smack dab in the middle of the Battle of Geonosis. With the rest of the Clone Wars yet to be fought, the pace of the game never slows from its frenetic beginning. A hanger full of vehicles keep things interesting. The flying gunship and hovertank are probably the most fun (heavily armed, heavily armored, while still maneuverable makes for an entertaining mix) and the on-foot sequences are probably the weakest. Any time you tap the attack button more than once Obi-Wan, Anakin, or Mace Windu will do some lame Jedi acrobatics and you can complete most missions by knocking dudes over with a simple "force push." Maybe that's some Jedi philosophy shit, but it seems more like crappy game design.

Missions range from "Protect a Convoy" to rescuing hostages, to just blowing away anything and everything in sight, but to complete some of the more advanced levels, strategy and skill are required. Bonus objectives add a little more gameplay to an otherwise kinda short game. If you've lost all faith in the new Star Wars trilogy but thought the massive battle at the end of Episode II was kind of cool, then playing this game will not disappoint.

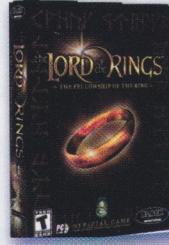
THE LORD OF THE RINGS



The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (EA Games)- Congratulations EA Games. While this adaptation of the Peter Jackson movie is not perfect, it comes pretty damn close. The game seamlessly blends scenes from the movie and action in the game, typically morphing from live action to digital carnage before each level. Play as either Aragorn, Legolas, or Gimli and kick some serious fucking Middle Earth ass! The game encourages players to link attacks from enemy to enemy and once you get going, there is almost no stopping the carnage.

We might even dare say the game is better than the movie. If you are of the mindset that the *Lord of the Rings* movies are pretty cool, but mostly it's a bunch of drawn-out back story between some kick-ass fight scenes. When a fight scene finally does roll around in the movie your biggest wish is to jump in and get in on the action. Well, here's your chance.

The game spans the plot of the first two movies and includes some of the special features from the DVD, so if you're playing as Legolas, and you reach level five, and interview with actor Orlando Bloom is unlocked. The same system unlocks a secret level and secret character at the end of the game, which, after the game reached a thrilling finale, was kind of a let down. And while the game could have been longer, it still gets a thumbs-way-fucking-up!



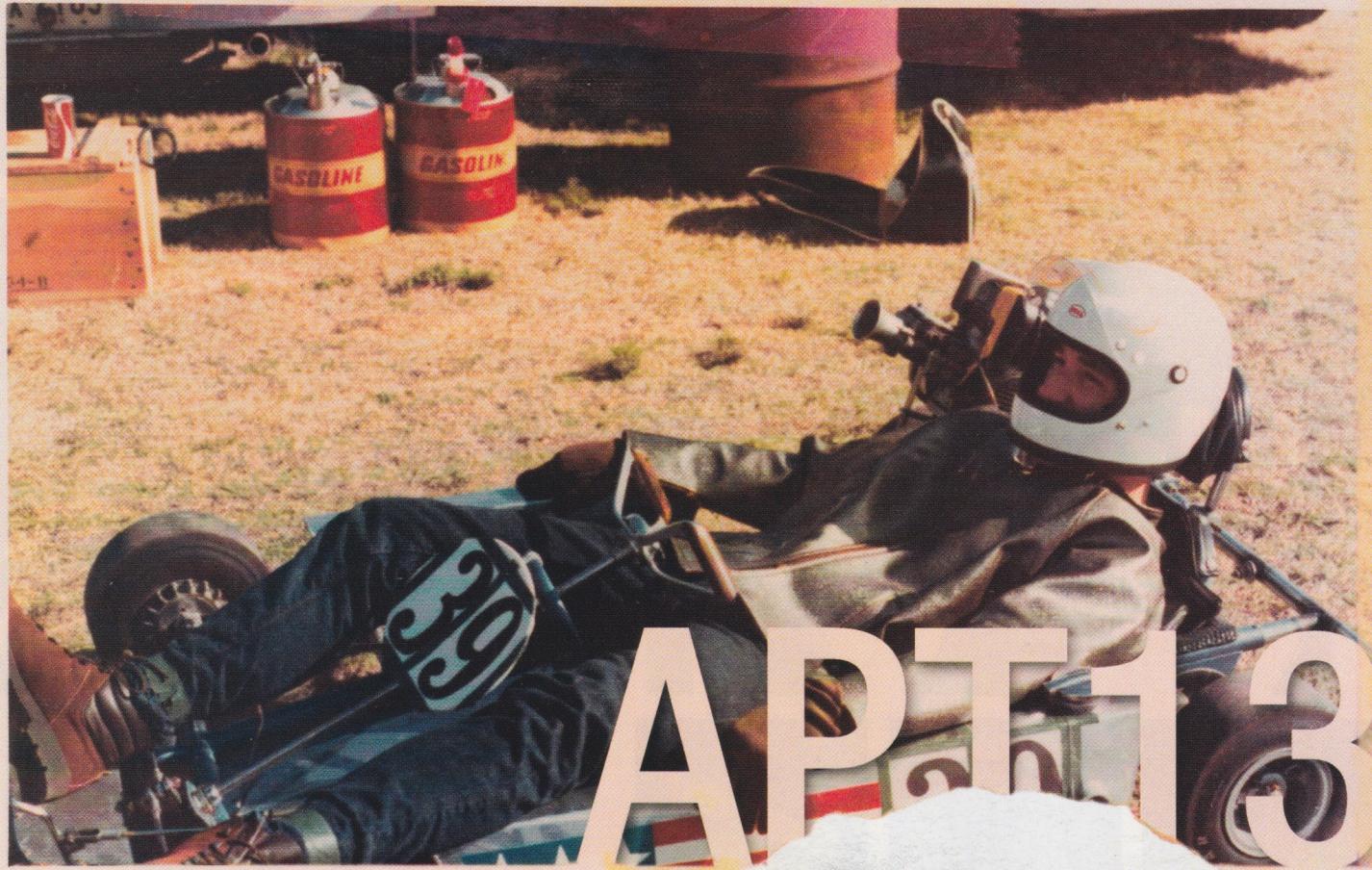
The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (EA Games)- Somewhere in cyberspace, some Peter-Jackson-looking-dude is debating some Golem-looking-dude whether *The Lord of the Rings* movie is better than the book. In the video game world, there's no comparison between *The Two Towers* (based on the movie) and *Fellowship of the Ring* (supposedly based on the book).

Lets see what words can describe this game... Lame, tedious, boring, stupid, not-fabulous, not-fierce, "are you serious?", and just God-awful.

The combat system is a joke compared to *The Two Towers*, things get ultra-choppy any time more than five dudes show up on screen, and the camera is by far the worst part of this game, often getting "stuck" on a wall or rotating so you can't even see the enemies kicking your sorry little ass. In *The Two Towers*, you can pull off elaborate combos, the screen can become totally filled with enemies with no slowdown, and the camera always gives you a perfect angle on the action.

Fellowship lets you play as either Frodo, Aragorn, or Gandalf and of course the character who is the most fun (Gandalf) gets the least amount of playing time. Aragon is too slow and Frodo is a total spaz, nearly impossible to control.

The first mission involves Frodo hiding from the Black Riders (those grim-reaper looking dudes from the first movie) and if you get in their line of sight, game over. I should have stopped playing right there because kind of like *Bounty Hunter*, the only people who will derive any enjoyment from this game are the hardcore fans of everything Tolkien.

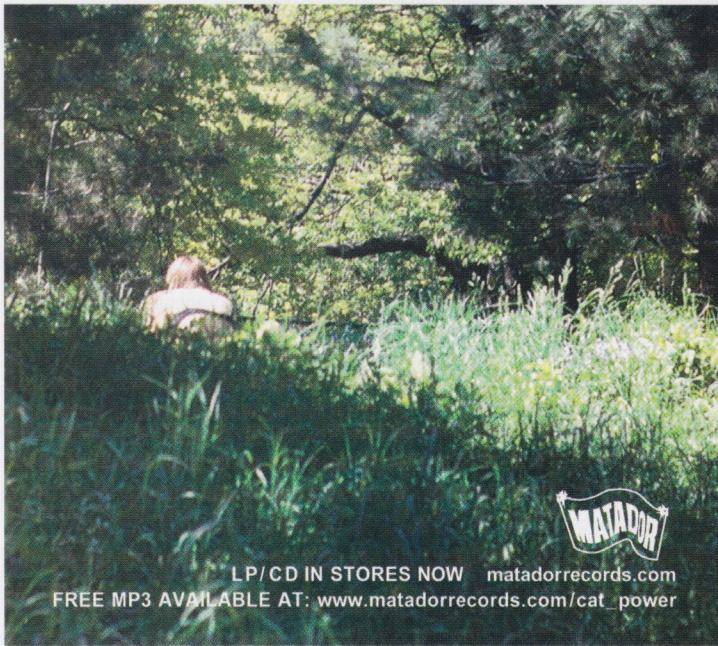


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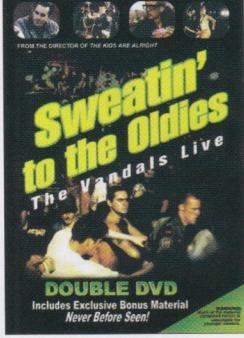
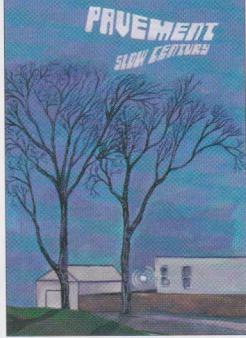
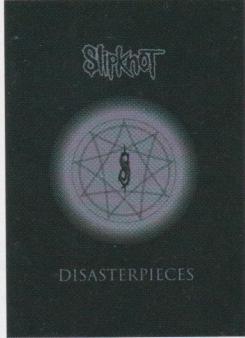
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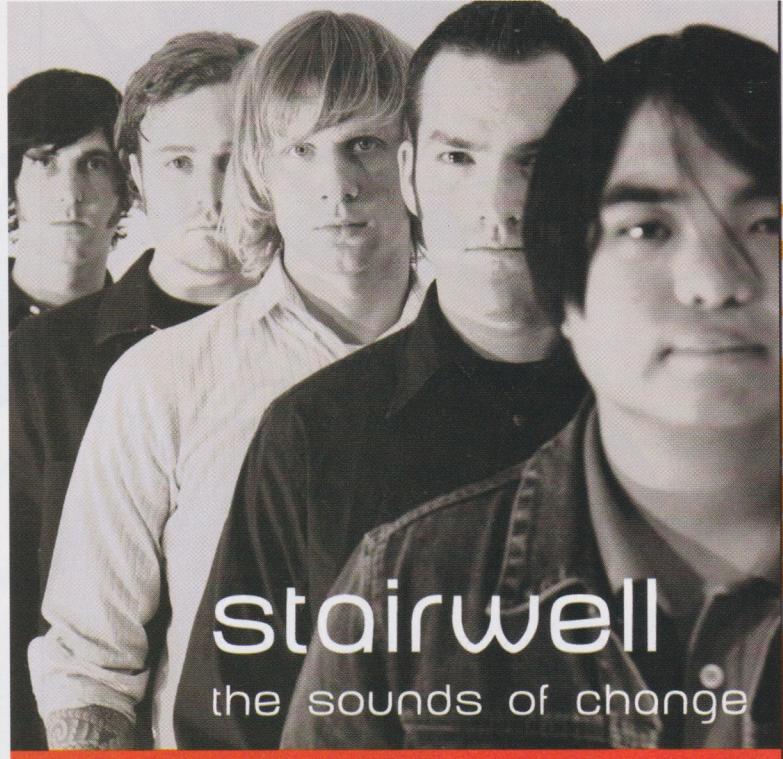
video REVIEWS



Slipknot "Disasterpieces" (Roadrunner) DVD- Say what you will about Slipknot—they play silly nu-metal rap-rock, they have a stupid gimmick going with those clown suits, no good (metal) band could ever possibly come from a place like Iowa, etc.—but they put on a hell of a show. While watching the beginning of this DVD, which chronicles a trip by the band to play an enormous gig at the London Arena, a friend of mine sitting next to me was forced to remark, "you know, I never liked this band at all, but I bet going to one of their shows would be out-fucking-standing." He's right, and if you've never been to a Slipknot show and seen it for yourself then this video is a good introduction. I have to admit, I love Slipknot. I think their two records are wonderfully brutal and anger like that of singer, Corey (AKA clown #8), simply cannot be faked. He is one pissed off dude. I would even go as far to say that Slayer's latest record took more than a few cues from the guitar/drum sounds made on Slipknot's first record. With that said, watching the band take the stage in London and get ready to tear the 15,000 people at the show to shreds with "People=Shit" is intense to say the least. When the unstoppable "The Heretic Anthem" blasted out of my flimsy speakers it almost made the 25 minutes I spent trying to get my Playstation 2 to play this worth it (as far as I could tell, you can only play Disc 1 of this two disc set on a computer). Buy this. **Ross Siegel**

Pavement "Slow Century" (Matador) DVD- Matador's release of the Pavement DVD, entitled *Slow Century*, endured a history as speculative as the bands own demise. With cryptic allusions to a break-up, fans were left asking, was it for real? It proved to be, and fans turned to asking the same question about this DVD, which was originally tapped for release in the fall of 1999. Disc one of SC features a documentary by Lance Bangs. When compared to the slick band histories of *Behind the Music*, the story of Pavement lacks any sensational revelations. Bob Nastanovich, still the nicest guy in the band, curiously makes the only post-break-up interview. Regardless, the documentary's strength lies in its raw footage, culminating into the unedited performance of the last three songs. Mesmerizing in its morbid potential for analysis, however, Malkmus' much debated line about his handcuffs resides within the DVDs "easter eggs." Next up is the real prize. It's amazing that a band that flew under the mainstream radar, even while alternative was breaking, has this many videos (13). The quirky videos are accentuated by the absence of the typical rock star glamour, further brought to life by the humorous band/director commentary. Disc two's live performances, recorded in Seattle and Manchester in 1999, are very heavy on *Terror Twilight* material. The collection suggests that it sometimes takes longer than two years for the world to realize how influential a band like this was. **Jason Mueller**

Sweatin' to the Oldies: The Vandals Live (Kung Fu) DVD- When I buy a double DVD set, I usually end up watching the first disc and then leaving the other one in the box, as second discs are usually full of superfluous footage nobody really cares about anyway (e.g. videos that didn't make MTV's playlist, outtakes, deleted scenes). I'm certainly glad that I didn't do that with this release though, because the bonus disc is more entertaining than the feature. Disc number one has a short history of The Vandals and their dysfunctional guitarist Warren, along with a full live set from 1993. It looks and sounds good but unless you really like the Vandals you probably won't care enough to watch the whole thing and you especially won't care enough to watch the whole thing over again while the band makes silly comments about it. Luckily, the second disc has one of the best bonus features I have ever seen. There is old live footage of Dave Quackenbush doing vocals with Pennywise on "Wouldn't It Be Nice." It truly rocks, but the rest of the bonuses seem to be thrown in there just to make you feel like you got your full \$15 worth. Conclusion: this DVD succeeded in making me turn off my TV and go listen to my Pennywise albums of yore. **Stan Horaczek**



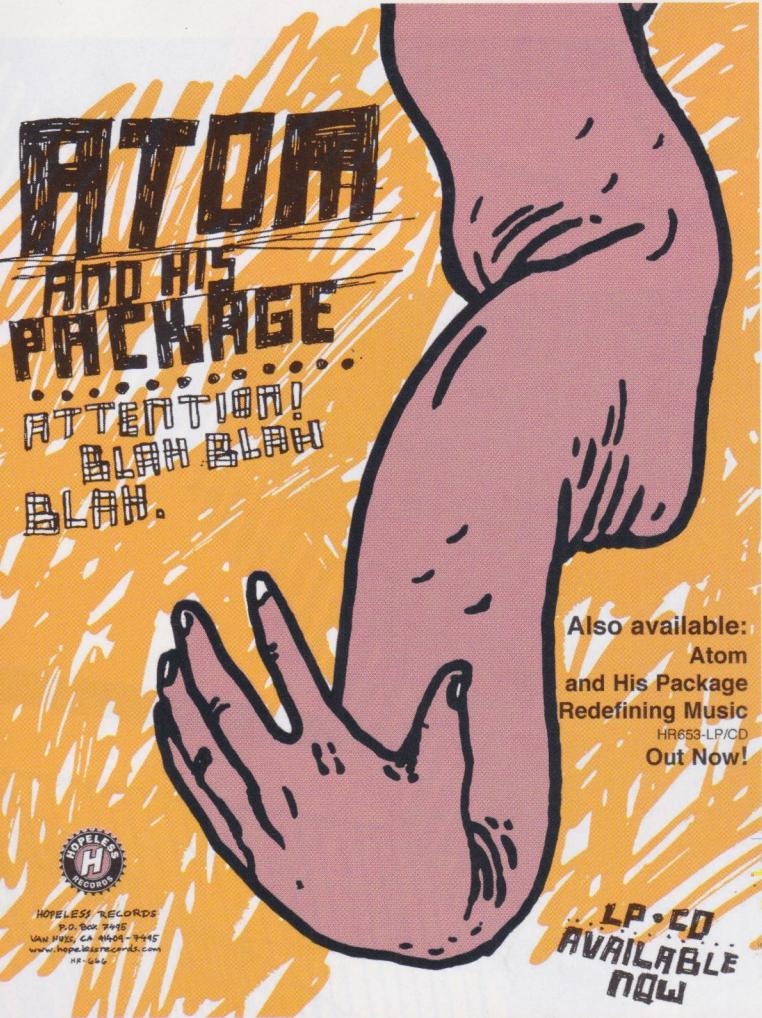
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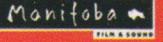


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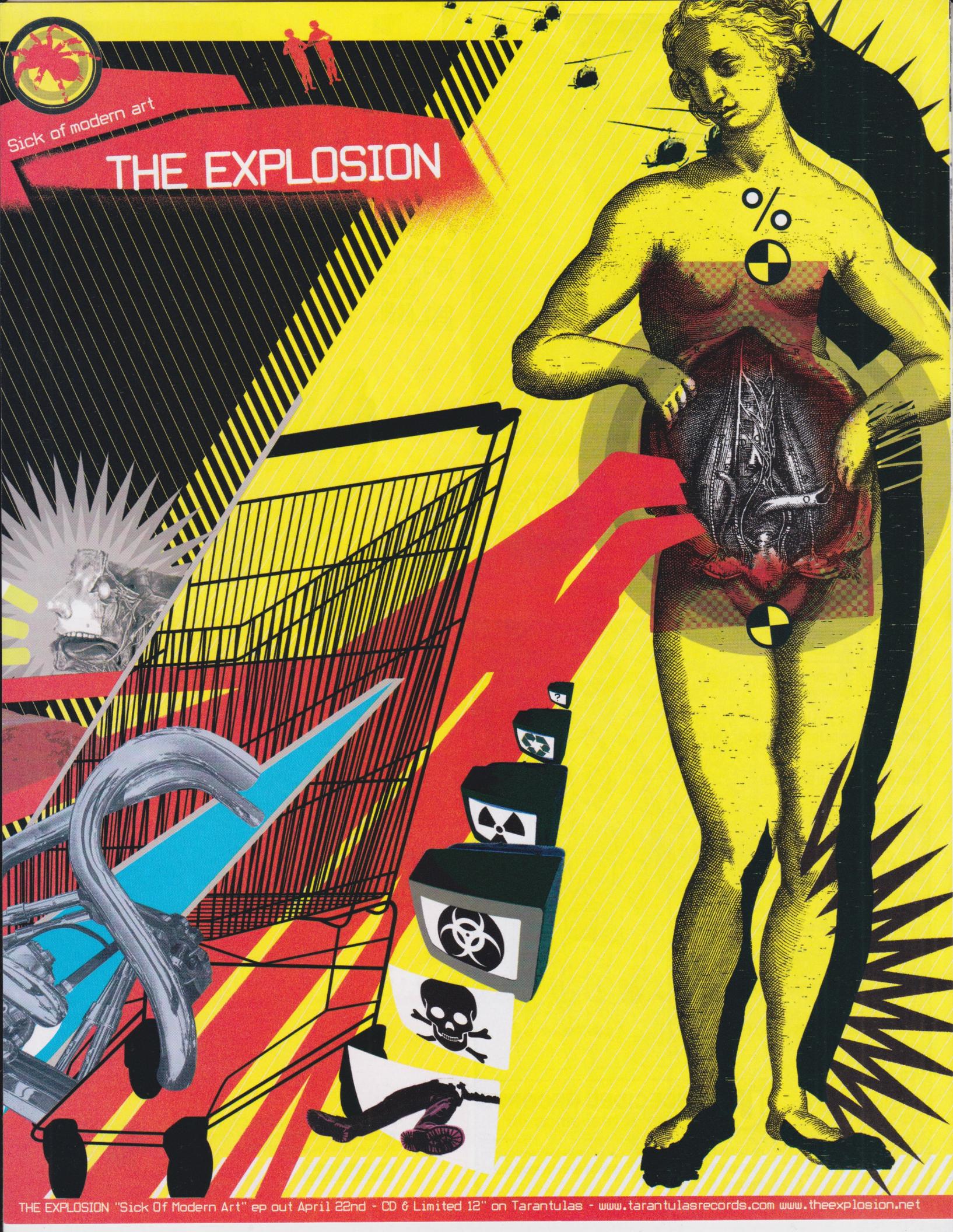
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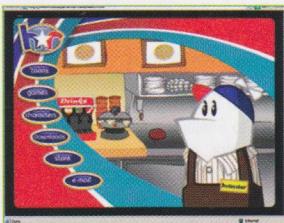
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Hardwired

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Home Star Runner

Web Page: <http://www.homestarrunner.com>

The Goods: Home Star Runner is the lead character in this series of internet cartoon shorts featuring such exciting plots as not being able to make parsnip soup because Strong Bad, the inept villain, stole them all. Home Star Runner is the kindest, most absent-minded character out of this trouble-free bunch. Plus, he has a speech impediment. When asked what his favorite season is, Home Star Runner responds, "Sure." Perhaps his response aims to protect the other seasons' feelings, but most likely because his clueless modus operandi is his sure ticket to victory every time. Marzipan (Home Star's handless girlfriend), The Cheat (Strong Bad's aptly named brainy accomplice), Pom Pom (fat character whose body is one big pocket), Poopsmith (shit shoveler), and Strong Sad (narcoleptic Stay Puft Marshmallow Man) round out the cast. It's *South Park* meets Charlie Brown on the web—a zany group of characters and voices invented by two brothers, probably in their mother's basement. Except here, the good guy always wins with less brazen social commentary. Thank God, and thank you, Home Star Runner! **Adam Lindenbaum**



Under Tec

URL: <http://www.under-tec.com>

The Goods: Have you ever thought of buying a dog just to have someone else to blame when you break wind? Now there's a cheaper solution. Instead of driving all the way to the ASPCA just click on www.under-tec.com. Under-Tec is a company that specializes in "Under-Ease" smell proof under pants. For only \$19.95 you can blast one in a crowded theater and come off smelling like roses. Under-Ease are simply airtight underpants with a rear exit hole covered with a charcoal filter. According to the online demonstration, the offending odors from a trouser cough are filtered through the charcoal thus leaving the fart smell free. Some other gems on this sight are the "wear and care" page, the media page and, my favorite, the testimonials archives. Here you'll find sob stories from some of our nation's most flatulent. There's an especially good one from a clinical psychologist who had trouble attracting patients until she tried under-ease. According to founders Arlene and Buck Weimer we must "wear them for the ones you love..." or they'll leave you if they smell rotting cabbage in bed one more goddamned time. **Tim Holden**



Lego Death

URL: <http://www.extrabad.com>

The Goods: This page is chock full of interesting flash cartoons featuring a beer and weed-loving college student robot and a hostile redneck militia's takeover to make the mountain time zone the center of the universe. Forage past these temptations toward the Block Death section. Witness historic executions, torture tactics, and a variety of life's other mishaps sure to result in death—all depicted in Lego. My personal favorites are the Goldfinger "Do you expect me to talk" scene, the jungle quicksand drowning and the guy with his head caught in a turbine jet engine. For those with a higher tolerance, explore the execution at the cross, the gas chamber and the iron maiden. "What mom? It is not sick. They're just the Lego's you bought me for Christmas. Well, you could have gotten me the skateboard and I asked for. Huh? I already made the rocket ship on the freaking package and dad said, "very nice son," as he downed another gin and tonic. You're always stifling my creativity. It's art—you just can't see it. Fuck you." **Adam Lindenbaum**



International Federation Of Competitive Eating

Web Page: <http://www.ifoce.com>

The Goods: Each year, Americans eat 38 billion hamburgers. It takes 2,500 gallons of water to produce one pound of red meat. Cattle consume one half of all the fresh water consumed on Earth. The sixty million people who will starve this year could be adequately fed if Americans reduced their meat intake by just 10 percent. Do you care? Well, the people at IFOCE sure don't. Repulsive is the operative word at this site, growing in membership, competition, and most obviously, width. While many say competitive eating is not a sport, how can you argue against names like Frank "Large" Delarosa, Takeru "The Tsunami" Kobayashi, and Eric "Badlands" Booker (presumably, named after his body's terrain). Fox's *Glutton Bowl* and *Man Vs. Beast* recently brought competitive eating to prime time; proving the IFOCE is more than just a traveling freak show. Kobayashi, a 24-year old who weighs 113 lbs., currently holds the number one ranking and the new world record of 50 1/2 hot dogs and buns in 12 minutes. He weighed 120 lbs. after the contest. *Law of Inertia* also gives mayonnaise record holder (128 oz. in 8 minutes) Oleg Zhomitskiy its praises for recently downing 16 1/4 matzo balls in less than 5 1/2 minutes. Usually, just one matzo ball is heavy enough to knock me out for the count. Sorry, Grandma. **Adam Lindenbaum**



David Hasselhoff

Web Page: <http://www.for-david.com>

The Goods: Its been years since *Baywatch* was canceled, *Knight Rider* is over a decade and a half gone and *Dr. Jeckle and Mr. Hyde* bombed on Broadway, but David Hasselhoff is still throbbing with life on the Internet. There are hundreds of fansites that are devoted to the legend of Herr Hasselhoff. But to witness that unbridled love that Mr. Hasselhoff's followers have, just go to www.for-david.com. As far as I know this is the only fansite with its own official seal. It reads, "David Hasselhoff—In Him We Trust". Unfortunately, these people are dead serious. This comprehensive site even has a private login exclusively for David. The message board is a treat. The broken English from the German fans (approx. 50% of the mail) is especially endearing. But the best part is found in the Interactive Zone under Multimedia and Downloads. Play the video for his cover of "Hooked on a Feeling." A German television station produced this video, needless to say it is a *must* see for anyone interested in the bizarre world of foreign TV. In just 3 minutes 25 seconds one can see a superimposed David fly over a glacier dressed as an Eskimo while biting a salmon. I can only hope *Knight Rider 3000* gets the greenlight. **Tim Holden**



Modern Humorist

Web Page: <http://www.modernhumorist.com>

The Goods: If you are an Onion devotee but can't stand the weeklong wait for new knee-slapping material, then check out this site. This humor page is updated daily with submissions from anyone funny enough. Modern Humorist's strength is in its spot-on spoofs of pop culture. In the tradition of MAD Magazine, Modern Humorist's writers go through great pains to make the spoof look every bit like the original, but with a small, yet deliciously subversive, tweak. For example, I'm still convinced the spoof, "Ask Jeez" (staring your favorite son of God), was designed by the same people that made the original AskJeeves.com. While most of the submissions are seamless send ups of the original, there is one fabulous exception: the spoof of the R. Kelly sex video simply shows a French bulldog thrusting its loins against a small plush Pikachu doll to the music of Barry White. Other, non-spoofy, highlights include the Jim Morrison Similtron, which allows an animated Lizard King to "break on through to Flash technology." Please note: if using the Morrison Similtron make sure to lower the sound when you make him sing "Pork and Beans," he can really hit the high notes. **Tim Holden**

DEATH BY STEREO

FEATURED REVIEW

Aberdeen "Homesick and Happy To Be Here" (Better Looking) In between feeling nostalgic (and happy to be there) for the seemingly forgotten "twee" sound of the early '90s I found myself being irritated with the sound all over again. Hey, what can you do? Indie rock used to mean flimsy, poorly-recorded MOR rock with softie vocals and an overall wimpy feel that really won over the kids back in the days when a label like Simple Machines flourished. However, this record kicks off with very sweet female vocals over gently-played rock and then smoothly blends in more drums, slightly more ringing guitar and comes out with something textured and beautiful. "Sink or Float" finds an amazingly skilled way to make a soft, pretty song loud and blistering, and yet no less delicate. One of the first comparisons I had was Lush with a less urgent sound- after all, nothing should be rushed when making music like this. If you like it more gentle and subtle, check this out. **dup**

Aerogramme "Sleep And Release" (Matador)- Sometimes a reviewer becomes a little too aware of his own tendencies; a bit too acutely in contact with the once-subtle nuances that inspire a pretty good record to get a more enthusiastic review. Is this a stylistic flourish or critically immature shortcoming? This is a new rock record from Matador, something of a surprise if you ask me, but what a record either way. The first track manages a heavy, almost desert-rock guitar sound and meshes it with quieter, emo-ish vocals. The distinction is too harsh to ignore as the track switches from one well-played style to another without any obvious problems. In the middle of a slowed down pace they slyly blend a Wurlitzer warble to the mix and sing in choral harmony before the loud riffs slam you back home. Whoa, THAT's disquieting, and it's only the first track. Apparently this Glaswegian trio's second offering is an exercise in blending the style of punk's most misunderstood bastard, emo, with various other beautifully miserable styles here. There's strings to evoke the classical vibe, the organs to bring the church into it and even synths to usher in the New Romantic mode. The result is a record that finds more dramatic texture and mood than 100 Deep Elm compilations. They keep this up and we might have a new Smiths. **dup**

All Is Suffering "The Past: Vindictive Sadisms of Petty Bureaucrats" (Crucial Blast)- I almost wasn't going to review this one but then I opened up the booklet and saw that all songs were written and performed by Richie Blackmore, Lemmy Kilmister (Motorhead), and Ronnie James Dio (Black Sabbath). How fucking cool is that! I mean how the hell did they get all those guys in one place at one time? And how did such a metal supergroup come into being without me even hearing a word about it. Look out for these guys headlining next year's Castle Donington Monsters of Rock fest! **Aaron Lefkove**

Allister "Last Stop Suburbia" (Drive-Thru)- If you live in suburbia, move. Now. **Jonah Bayer**

The Appleseed Cast "Lost Songs" (Deep Elm)- This Lawrence, Kansas band sounds like they picked up where Sunny Day Real Estate and Braid left off. A delight to some, theft to others. It's common knowledge for many music fans that the whole indie/emo thing is coming to a played-out state. The reality of it is, whether it be theft, flattery, or admiration, the songs are not half bad. These songs were recorded back in 1998 when the band's line-up was in question. Nearing the album's completion the band found themselves without drummer, then found a new drummer, decided to scrap the tracks and start anew. Four years afterwards in May of 2002 the band decided to resurrect these songs and finish them up with vocals and overdubs. The outcome is nine tracks of dramatic, emotional, atmospheric indie swirls of guitars, robust basslines, patient percussion, and forlorn vocals. The album presents Appleseed Cast's experimental side, especially with the last track on the album, "Novice Ambient Cannibalization," which features an ongoing ethereal sound driven by steady drumming and strumming. This collection is very good by Appleseed Cast's standards, but in comparison to other bands out there doing the same type of thing this disc would just be passable. **Celeste Tabora**

Atom And His Package "Attention, Blah, Blah, Blah" (Hopeless)- My, how the fashionable have fallen. At one point,

Ikara Colt "Chat and Business" (Epitaph)

- The thing I like about the new-skool rock and roll bands coming from Epitaph Records' hallowed halls, is that they play loud but they don't try for more than they can manage. That's sort of the beauty of rock and roll: how hard you play is far more important and interesting than how many notes you can stuff into a few bars. In other words, bands like Turbonegro, The Hives, Division of Laura Lee, and The (International) Noise Conspiracy tend to take one very simple chord progression and build on it with rhythm changes, guitar solos, and vocal virtuosity. If you listen to a Hives song, for example, you will not find the band pulling 124th notes, meter changes, or multiple chorus parts out of their hats. Rather, they take a simple tune and stick to it for three minutes until the song is over, without deviating from the basic template set in the first seven seconds of the song. The end result is short, sweet garage rock that says what it has to without biting off more than it can chew. Some might say these bands are taking a bit more from the Stooges or even Black Dots-era Bad Brains than they probably should, but I see loud, fast, unpretentious rock the way it was meant to be played. If you too like this idea of garage rock, then Britain's Ikara Colt will fit nicely into your record collection between Nirvana and Sonic Youth. **Ross Siegel**

this guy and his schtick was all the rage among my peers and somehow I, the least informed on this artist, receive the newest record. Before I put it all down as simple label-spite I had better listen. The same idea is still here: one guy devotes his nerdish vocals to catchy, lo-fi synthpop tracks about whatever. Track 3 has some interesting lines about Palestinians and track 4 is about Adam marrying his grandmother. Maybe it's because this is the first time I've listened to an AAHP album all the way through, but this stuff still has a goofball appeal that is largely bolstered by its charm and self-effacing wit. I suppose that there's only so much of that you can stand when this is basically the only act the man does. Still, this is pretty likable stuff— If you still like AAHP then you'll dig. **dup**

AM FM "The Sky is the New Ground" (Polyvinyl)- Although I suffered through Owen, I figured I should give Polyvinyl another shot. Besides, I thought that one of the guys on the cover was kinda attractive. The post-punk band's first song "Every Start" was pleasant, sans vocals, and a great opener. The second song "Gone in Three" begins with some odd distortion, but segues well into Brit-influenced (read: Blur) vocals. The lyrics may be written by a lonely soul, but they don't sound like Morrissey. Instead, they're space-agey and almost, dare I say, poppy? "Mrs. Astronaut" continues the outer space theme and has a cheerful musicality to it, not unlike songs often found in '60's musicals. In the same vein, I can't help but have a nostalgic adoration for "All to Remember," a romantic song that opens with harmonica notes and ends with the lyrics "Everyday yr [sic] running scared/Everyday you're running there/Everyday you're running I'll be there" and won't induce gagging because of sugar-coated sappiness. **Rebecca Swanner**

Bitter, Bitter Weeks (My Pal God)- Before you look at the back of the album listen to the first song and tell me what gender you think the singer is. I mistook the vocalist for a female folk singer with a great range. Oops. His name is Brian, but he's got a good range anyway. Maybe that's because he's depressed and wants to sing about it. Or at least I'm guessing so from the name of the band, its gloomy cover art of a woman standing in the rain and his name: Brian McTear. The good part is he's frank, not whiny, about his bitterness and listening to the album made me feel like he was patiently telling me a good story. For those of us who have given up on everything, including love, as often happens in February McTear offers us a kick of reality, "Stop acting like there's nothing left to dream." **Rebecca Swanner**

Black Sea "Ghost Lanterns" (Lovitt) EP- Very interesting. Shelby and Jason of Frobud have teamed up with Joe Lally of Fugazi to create this three-song soundscape. Any band named after an XTC record couldn't be too bad. Take equal parts Washington DC punk rock in the vein of Fugazi, add some June

of 44, throw in some British shoegazer rock a la Swervedriver or Slowdive and you're getting close to Black Sea territory. Of course we're all huge suckers for all things Fugazi, so whenever a member of punk's last great hope sits in with another band, hordes of potential fans flock to their shores to find out what new project Ian or Brendan or Joe (Guy never seems to be involved in other projects) has undertaken. Joe's unmistakable steady-as-a-rock bass playing style is coupled with stereo-chorused guitars that arpeggio their way around the fretboard and add a nice counterpoint to Shelby's dreamy, slightly off-key vocals. The music here is dark, ethereal, and introspective. While there is definitely room to get better, especially in the dynamics department, of which there is very little shift, I am eagerly awaiting Black Sea's full length, if there is to be one. **Ross Siegel**

Blessing the Hogs "The Poisoning" (Good Fellow)- Ah yes, the refreshing sounds of no-frills, unrelenting, brutal hardcore/metal. You crust-loving, dred-locked, Drop Dead swear-byers are going to shit your already shat-in pants over this shiny disc. This is many degrees beyond pissed. And heavy? Nell Carter and Chris Farley combined don't even match up. Add John Candy, and just maybe. *The Poisoning* is highly effective and enjoyable, nonetheless not unique or revolutionary. Concerning this disc however, I don't think that matters much as that is just not the point here. If you have been yearning for some non-abrasive hardcore as of late, Blessing The Hogs are just the remedy the voodoo doctors ordered. Fans of extreme and brutal music take note. **Joe Vespa**

The Blinding Light "Glass Bullet" (Deathwish Inc.)- I had never heard anything about these dudes until I found this snazzy looking digipak in my hands. Apparently there is a member here that had something to do with the older, and much loved and respected metalcore outfit, Threadbare—the singer I believe. I liked Threadbare's first album a great deal, but this doesn't quite measure up, but The Blinding Light isn't bad. Sometimes sludgy and sometimes chaotic, The Blinding Light chugs through five noisy and discordant tracks that leaves the part of your brain that craves clever hooks with a lot to be desired. Perchance your brain doesn't come with that part that craves clever hooks, or it has the part, but it doesn't need to be attended to like mine does, you will doubtlessly appreciate this CD, as it is tight, heavy, and definitely angry enough to appeal to the most metallic of heads. Don't get me wrong, I can rock to this style of metalcore myself, but it does grow tedious after a short while, and leaves that part of my brain I mentioned earlier desperate for a melody or memorable moment. **Joe Vespa**

Bluebird "Hot Blood" (Dim Mak)- I've tried numerous times to come up with a clever opening line that would do this band justice. I mean, it's not like they're doing anything completely groundbreaking or original or even anything that a number of other bands aren't doing already. It's just that they play with a certain finesse and spirit that gives the music more heart and soul than most other bands out there right now doing the whole '70's retro thing. The music is pretty straight-forward overdriven melodic rock with hints of psychedelia and infectious '60's pop melodies scattered about. Production-wise there seems to be a lot going on in the mix with thick swirling guitar tones that envelope the listener and serve as a palatial setting for the vocals. The solos and leads radiate a strange luminescence where they're subtly in the mix but not too up front, a recording technique which is scarcely used in this day and age. Clearly they're being played more for the song than for the guitarist's own personal satisfaction, which is a true rarity. Wayne Kramer of political proto-punks, The MC5, lends his services, playing lead on one track. They got the guy who helped to kick out these type of jams way back when so you know it's gotta be top quality! **Aaron Lefkove**

Bombshell Rocks "From Here And On" (Epitaph/Burning Heart)- Ok, this band has released at least three records already and has to have some following at this point so do they really need to put a sticker on the disc that boasts, "If You Like Rancid, You Will Love BOMBSHELL ROCKS"? Is that a worse comment on the promotion of this band or the inactivity of Rancid in recent times? Nevertheless, this act is on a different trip than Rancid it seems— being from Sweden will do that to you. They still have

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FEATURED REVIEW

Theory of Ruin "Counter-Culture Nosebleed" (Escape Artist)

If you're going to go heavy this is the way to do it... discordant melodies, pulverizing blast beats, and strange time signatures. No it's not the new Dillinger Escape Plan album. Theory of Ruin are the bay area power trio fronted by Alex Newport, formerly of the bands Fudge Tunnel and Nailbomb and perhaps known even better for being the man behind the boards for several At The Drive In releases as well as their afro'd offspring the Mars Volta. The songs call to mind fellow Bay Area weirdo rockers Mr. Bungle and Primus in that they stray from the usual 4/4 pounding of your average headbanger, opting for a more technical, and, dare I say, intelligent approach. Newport and crew take the best elements of thrash, grind, and sludge and mix them into a potent concoction of what could best be described as art-metal. Fans of everyone from Dillinger to Neurosis to Rush will be able to find something here that satisfies their musical tastes. **Aaron Lefkove**

soon, structurally speaking the band's songs bear a striking resemblance to much of the Cave In of yore. The distortion may be turned down from 11 and the screaming has been replaced by melodic crooning, but riff for riff I'm hearing more then just a hint of the Cave In of old. Much of the guitar work on this album, if played in a different context with different effects, could just as easily go over opening for Hatebreed as they do playing with the more subdued bands they've toured with as of late. Time will tell how these guys fair now that they've finally broken through and poked their head above ground, but judging from some of the tracks on here and the already voracious response they've gotten live we may be hearing Cave In sandwiched between the Foo Fighters and Audioslave on KROQ. **Aaron Lefkove**

Channel 3 "CH3" (Dr. Strange)- I creamed my jeans when I finally got my hands on this slab of plastic! Channel 3, my second favorite Southern California punk band (only to Black Flag) are finally back after a decade plus hiatus and with what the package claims as their best release since 1982's *Fear of Life*. This point could be debated for hours, as I think songs like "I Can't Afford It" from their later period beats the piss out of "I Got a Gun" or "Catholic Boy" any day. But I digress. Yes indeed this is a fine release and a welcome return to form for one of the originators of the SoCal punk sound. A little less abrasive then some of their Orange County counterparts like Black Flag or the Adolescents but still retaining a gritty hard edged sound (they were the only American band to have a release on the notorious UK punk label No Future). Channel 3 combined the aggression and fury of those aforementioned with a keen pop sensibility and socially aware lyrics. Contemporaries with everyone from the Germs to the Bad Brains to Bad Religion, Channel 3 never have and probably never will get the recognition that they rightfully deserve, but while those bands have a) driven themselves into an early grave; b) gone on to play some very forgettable music; or, c) become heroes to mall punks all across suburbia, Channel 3 remain true to their roots, playing the sound that they helped spawn. Pick this up for a punk rock history lesson. **Aaron Lefkove**

Counterfit "Super Amusement Machine..." (Negative Progression)- Sometimes I can't quite find the words for certain records. I feel that I haven't formed a concrete, definite opinion of exactly how this record makes me feel and where it would fit in my CD collection. I leave it in my 5-disc CD changer just to spin around and around, night after night, as I work at my computer, or fall asleep, or drink my morning orange juice. Every two hours or so, the record in question comes on and I think, "man, I've gotta just sit down and write the damn review for this damn record." One doesn't have to be Lester Bangs to guess that the words in a review of a record you are ga-ga for flow like water in a tidal wave, so it makes sense that when you find yourself reticent to talk about a certain record... that's usually a bad sign. With that said, San Diego's Counterfit are so close— and I hear their live show does them justice far more than their records—but still so far away. The music is warm, clean, indie rock that 99 out of 100 New Jersey kids would call emo. I would call this a good first full length, but a disc that will never, ever receive another spin in my 5-disc CD changer again. Finally. **Ross Siegel**

Count The Stars "Never Be Taken Alive" (Victory)- Count The Stars are a band who play catchy rock music. The band has a unique** image and sound that sets them apart from many of their contemporaries in the indie rock scene. Their music is mostly straight ahead rock with some elements of hardcore*** thrown in. They go on tour, party, have fun and do lots of dumb things**** just like many other rock bands. These guys are great.*****

*Read: Generic, boring and dull.

**Actually they look and sound like every other manufactured emo band out there.

***When was this ever considered hardcore? There's nothing remotely hard about any of this.

****The drummer has a tattoo of the singer on his ass. I've seen it.

*****That's 15 little stars for those keeping count. **Aaron Lefkove**

Creeper Lagoon "Remember The Future" (Arena Rock Recording Co.)

If you're lonely for those good ol' easy alternative rock days, Creeper Lagoon's latest release may be the answer to your longing. *Remember the Future* is the Bay Area foursome's 5th release & 3rd EP. Though their critical acclaim seems to have faded, rumors of substance abuse consistently surround the band, and their major label (Dreamworks to be specific) days are long gone, their ability to craft mellow and pretty tunes have not decreased in strength. Creeper Lagoon front-man Sharky Laguana picks up where things fell apart with his band and recorded these five songs. The mixing was rushed to meet Arena Rock's deadline. It was finished up in 48 hours, but the end result is nothing rushed at all. The simple and pretty slow-going songs on this EP make you feel like it's a sedated valentines day in Creeper Lagoon world all the time. You may also find these songs quite appropriate for an episode of *Dawson's Creek*, *Gilmore Girls*, or any of the other WB primetime neo-dramas. **Celeste Tabora**

Dark Day Dawning "Nothing That I Wouldn't Give" (Resurrection A.D.)- Sometimes I think that the only reason that bands like this release their music on CD is so kids can listen to it and memorize where the good parts are for the live show. Everyone knows that going to a show is much more fun if you know the songs well enough to dance and sing along. The breakdowns are particularly brutal on this album and I'm sure that they make for some sick dancing when they're played live. The parts of the songs between the breakdowns however, are somewhat less inspiring and are even confusing at times. DDD mixes elements of metal and melodic hardcore to form an energetic blend of aggression that is sometimes called "screamo." While this disc won't make it into my regular listening rotation, it has convinced me to go out and catch these guys the next time they come around. I just can't resist a good, metal breakdown. I would also like to applaud DDD for their use of alliteration in their name. It's good to see that some bands still appreciate the proper use of literary devices. **Stan Horaczek**

David Cross "Shut Up You Fucking Baby!" (Sub Pop)- Who on this review staff other than myself would be better suited to review a comedy album made by a Jew born and raised in Atlanta, GA and now residing in New York City? No one I tell ya! David Cross of HBO's "Mr. Show" fame comes at it with 2 discs of subversive and cynical stand-up comedy. Recorded in his, and my own, hometown of Atlanta, Cross pulls no punches, taking shots at rednecks, homosexuals, Jews, Republicans, mid-westerners, rival comedians and anyone else who gets in his way. This stuff isn't really funny in that ha-ha sense but rather more in the funny because it's the sad truth of the matter kind of way. By far his portrayal of the southern gentle mentality and the ignorance imbedded through years and years of conditioning had me rolling on the floor upon every listen. Goyem, what can you do? He's got the deep southern drawl down to a science, and sadly enough I can't help but agree with most of what he says. Brace yourself for a humorous dose of reality. **Aaron Lefkove**

The Delgados "Hate" (Mantra Recordings)- By way of Glasgow, Scotland comes this incredible indie rock outfit. Usually comparisons for hardcore or punk bands are so much easier to make than blissful pop music like this since most punk/hardcore bands are simply ripping off their predecessors while most indie

a certain Clash addiction which might garner comparisons to Rancid, but they're further advanced onto the pop-streetpunk style. Rancid might have had their MTV singles run, but it wasn't nearly as cleanly-produced or radio-ready as this. A song like "Warpath" straddles the line between a major label skate punk and streetpunk anthems in the vein of The Clash. Firstly, I'd have to say that there's an obvious push here to keep this band fed on the trail of Northern European successes like The Hives. But still, I remember the first (US) album from this act in 1999 and I must admit that they're progressing while I cannot say that it's bad at all. If you don't like this album for the catchy tunes on it, just pass it off to someone who's 13 years old and it might change their life. **dup**

Brazil "Daesin" (Fearless)- The press release says "Brazil is the name they have given themselves and *Daezin* is the name of their first work... The birth of this band will truly never leave their home state of Indiana the same again." First things first... no shit it's called Brazil, the name is written in huge letters across the cover of the CD. I don't need you to tell me that. Second, modern day circus sideshow freak Michael Jackson was born in Indiana, as well as Tito and Jermaine and LaToya and the rest of the crew, and the Jackson 5 started in Gary, Indiana and the state is still none the better, I highly doubt these guys have had nearly the profound effect that the Jacksons have, and that still doesn't make me want to visit! Now that we've gotten that out of the way it's time to get down to business. Supposedly these guys bear a striking resemblance to Radiohead and At The Drive In. I can hear a little ATDI, although arrangement wise Brazil are not nearly as interesting as those afro puffs ever were. In fact, I find that pondering the architectural intricacies of my Ninja Turtle cookie jar is a hell of a lot more interesting then listening to this melodramatic depressing garbage so I think I'm going to go do that now. **Aaron Lefkove**

The Cassettes (Lovitt)- It may pique one's interest to learn that the Cassettes line-up is fronted by Shelby Cinca of the now defunct noisy DC trio Frodus, and features Steven Kille of up-and-comers Dead Meadow, as well as Stephen McCarthy of Drag City freak-out supergroup Weird War. It may put a damper in your heart to hear that nothing on this self-titled debut would deliver any promise despite such an enticing bio. The Cassettes present a dullish blend of seventies power pop and psyche-heavy indie rock. Think of an incredibly watered down Posies meets a very failed attempt to invoke the spirit of Big Star or Badfinger. Critics have been particularly kind to the group, which is a bit perplexing given that the worn, almost non-existent production gives off flashes of lo-fi garage rock warmth, but as a whole, can't seem to escape coming off as flat. The light-hearted poppiness of this record comes off as unimaginative, something all together disappointing coming from musicians that have flourished in the creativity department with other bands. It may have been a mistake to tackle a genre that requires more of its songwriting, which is perhaps the albums weakest component. The uninspired lyrics reflect the group's inability to inflict any emotion on the listener. Word on the streets is that the Cassettes have already faced a complete post-album change of personnel. They should have let the painfully cute and amateurish album artwork be the last nail in the coffin as it's time to wave the white flag of this "I just wanted to try something different." side-project. **Jason Mueller**

Cave In "Antenna" (RCA)- Aside from their technical mastery, Cave In are geniuses at what they do. They've managed to do a stylistic 180, jump to a major label, a feat which has proved disastrous for many a punk and hardcore band who came before them, and they've still managed to not alienate a good majority of their fan base. The highly anticipated major label follow-up to *Jupiter* finds these metalheads turned Major Tom's floating further and further into the outer reaches of our universe amidst a sea of lush chorus, reverb and delay effects. Seriously, I'd love to see the arsenal of pedals that these guys break out in their live rig to get some of the twisted hypnotic sounds that they've become best known for. While last year's *Tides of Tomorrow* EP left me a bit disappointed and was pretty mediocre to say the least, *Antenna* lives up to all my expectations of King Crimson's Robert Fripp jamming out with Quicksand. For those who still believe in *Beyond Hypothermia* and *Until Your Heart Stops* there is hope. While metal Cave In may not be rearing their head again anytime

DEATH BY STEREO

bands borrow from their contemporaries. With that said, I think it is fair to make a comparison would be Flaming Lips meets Ida with a dash of Mercury Rev thrown in. I have heard a lot of people make the obvious Belle and Sebastian reference, but I think that might just be the Scottish thing. The Delgados' music really ranges a broad spectrum of sounds and textures, from huge, soaring melodies complete with keys and strings, to quiet ballads. Like The Flaming Lips, The Delgados have the art of the gorgeously arranged, dramatic pop song down to a science. This is an absolutely wonderful record that gets my vote for the best "settle-down" music of this entire issue. **Ross Siegel**

Dirty Three "She Has No Strings Apollo" (Touch and Go)- Admittedly, Dirty Three play some beautiful music. This is the perfect stuff for lounging around in your bed, half naked, freshly showered, and ready to read a book... or stare at the wall. This trio plays some of the most ethereal instrumental rock ever created by three people and a room full of instruments. Critics will say that if you've heard one Dirty Three song then you might as well have absorbed their entire back catalog, but those same people will also surely praise the band for their dreamy atmospheres created by the bucketful. Any Dirty Three record is worth having, but I recommend only one per collection. Frankly, I already have two others... do I really need *She Has No Strings Apollo* too? **Jim Jameson**

The Early November "For All Of This" (Drive Thru)- In order to properly review this record I first must relate two stories that were related to me by someone very close to this band. 1) The band rolls up to a strip club while on tour, throws the keys to their van and trailer to some guy in front who they just assume to be the valet and head inside for a little hot sticky lovin'. A few hours later they return to find that they had not in fact given their keys to the valet, but instead to some random patron of the club who took off with the van, equipment and trailer, never to be seen or heard from again. Good for him! 2) While on tour the band "accidentally" locked their merch guy in the trailer not realizing that he was the only one with keys. Real fucking smart. Yes, this music is as mindless and stupid as the people who created it. **Aaron Lefkove**

The Epidemic "Now Museum: Now You Don't" (Ohev)- I have to imagine that this is what a Volkswagen commercial would sound like if it were made by Aphex Twin. Most of this album is composed of experimental, sometimes atonal, music that's eerily mellow at times and almost incomprehensible at others. If you listen to the entire disc you'll hear some ambient lyrics that sound reminiscent of Thom York from Radiohead, nestled between bouts of experimental techno and eclectic instrumental samples. Some of the beats are composed entirely of odd sounds with no drums to be heard. If you listen to this and its not experimental enough right out of the case, I suggest that you play it in stereo and only put it through one speaker. This album has a lot of switching between the left and right sides and if you take one of those sides away, the experience can be somewhat different. It's amazing what you can find out when you knock the wires out of the back of your stereo. If you are one of those people that like that car commercial where the guys record the car sounds and make them into a song, then you should run out and get this. Me? I like my rock typical. **Stan Horaczek**

Fairweather "Alaska" (Equal Vision) EP- You gotta hand it to this band. Since 2000 they've been through an ungodly number of members for one band (fourteen!), two wrecked vans and let's not even get into the broken guitar count, but they're still at it. They claim to be disgusted and dissatisfied with the world of emo and said they've distanced themselves from the scene. Instead they've looked into using My Bloody Valentine, Sonic Youth, Slint, and Fugazi as inspirations for a new sound, but I don't hear it. If anything they may leave post-punk fans disgusted and dissatisfied themselves! Citing those bands mentioned above as influences could also be seen as insulting upon listening to this record because the four songs don't even compare to their greatness. Within this fifteen-minute disc I sense an attempt at angular percussion and math rock with no follow-through. The whiny vocals (lead and backing) and overly aggressive, too hurried guitar work seem to be the band's handicap. Fairweather is not exactly a lost cause, they aren't horrible. It sounds like they

FEATURED REVIEW

Slow Reader (Fueled By Ramen)- As I was going through my record collection I realized that I don't have any music I can put on when I have a girl over. For some reason it seems like metal and hardcore don't do a very good job of setting the mood. This album on the other hand, has maximum mood-setting potential. Slow Reader is the mellow and melodic project of Gabe Hascall and Rory Phillips (formerly of The Impossibles). All 11 songs on this disc consist of soaring vocals set on top of a euphoric mix of piano and guitar, with some eclectic percussion sounds and guest vocals thrown in for good measure. I think that these guys have done a really good job of making songs that are pretty without being wussy, which is a fairly difficult thing to do in a time in which whiney emo is extremely popular. The lyrics here are solid even though they usually take the back seat to the music and the liner notes are very aesthetically pleasing. This may not be my cup of tea, but I have to commend Slow Reader on creating an album mature and complex enough to be taken seriously and enjoyed by a very diverse group of listeners. If you pick this one up, your girlfriend will thank you for it. **Stan Horaczek**

just need to take a little time to really ponder their direction with future releases and how to really achieve the new sound they are trying to obtain. **Celeste Tabora**

The Fire Next Time "Sound of a Threat" (Dim Mak)- From the label that brought us Pretty Girls Make Graves and the Kills comes this posh-hardcore band who is intent on sounding the call of revolution. The opening guitar licks on "Roads and Bridges" reminded me of the catchy beginning of Queens of the Stone Age's "Song for the Deaf" but the rest of the song took a turn towards hardcore, with vocalist Alex Pasternak screaming most of the lyrics. The entire album follows this format, taking the listener on unexpected turns and mood switches as they preach the message of justice through the words of Mumia Abu-Jamal and the Last Poets. But it is "Blood in My Eye" that differentiates The Fire Next Time from other left-wing hardcore bands as it brings the album's aggressive progression to a grinding halt with the eerie plucking of strings and the soft wailing voice of a woman that reminds me of walking at dusk through Ireland's ghostly hills. And as the album draws to a dramatic close with the pressing question "Whose side are you on?" I'm on theirs. **Rebecca Swanner**

Further Seems Forever "How To Start A Fire" (Tooth and Nail)- It's pretty amazing that this South Florida emo band managed to find a replacement singer who sounds pretty much exactly like their old singer, only better. In case you've been living under a rock, Further Seems Forever was the band fronted by Dashboard Confessional's Chris Carraba. Mr. Carraba obviously went on to grace the covers of every magazine and the screens of every music video channel in the land, but not before releasing an impressive debut full length with this band in 2001. Their new singer, Jason Gleason, formerly of the hardcore outfit Affinity, has a gorgeous voice and adds a dose of commercial appeal to this quite capable band. Songs like the title track are perfect examples of soaring, sincere, emotional rock and roll, while others like "A Blank Page Empire" sounds like it could have been ripped straight out of the Jeff Buckley song book, so much so that it's a bit suspicious. Overall, I'd say fans of bands like Thursday or The Beautiful Mistake that want beauty with an edge will really like this CD. Not bad at all. **Ross Siegel**

Good Riddance "Cover Ups" (Lorelei Records)- I've always wanted to hear what Kiss' "I Stole Your Love" would sound like as covered by Good Riddance! Actually, not really, but just in case you wanted to, Russ and the rest of the gang have been kind enough to grace us with an entire album devoted entirely to covers. Although taking on other bands' tunes is always fun, and in some cases can save your band's ass with a tough crowd, cover albums usually represent an all time low or a period when the creative well has finally run dry. In any case the tunes here sound like Good Riddance playing a bunch of other bands' songs, which may be a good or a bad thing depending on who you talk to. The covers range from pretty straight ahead (Black Flag's "My War," "Outlaw" by Chron Gen, "Hall of Fame" by Government Issue) to the totally laughable ("Leader of the Pack" complete

with high pitched girlie voices) and a few that fall somewhere in between. This is worth a listen or two for the intro to "Leader of the Pack" alone. **Aaron Lefkove**

Harkonen "Shake Harder Boy" (Hydra Head)- I would argue against any discernable trends in the music Hydra Head releases, save the idea that the label has a knack for finding some pretty balls-to-the-wall metal bands. Nonetheless, one listen to this Tacoma, WA rock band and you instantly know exactly what label released it. Perhaps Harkonen's mathy Botch-meets-Coalesce sound-rife with samples and feedback-does too good a job of mixing post-Deadguy era hardcore with stoner-rock monotony, just like most bands associated with Boston's finest aggressive rock label. Whatever the case, Harkonen are an interesting, heavy, brooding band that probably puts on a fine show live. **Ross Siegel**

Har Mar Superstar "You Can Feel Me" (Record Collection)- The first time I heard this I thought it was stupid. It seemed like one of those things that would be funny if it were one of your friends doing it—it being pretending that you're a sweet talking R&B sex symbol when you're just another white guy with too much free time and a sequencer—but it got pretty old after about 30 seconds. Then I saw Har Mar live and it all made sense. First off, the boy can sing. And yes, while his dance moves and the whole stripping shick was surprisingly entertaining in itself (even for a cynic like yours truly), what's more amazing is that I think he takes himself seriously—and why shouldn't he? While I've read reviews that refer to Har Mar as "diminutive," I think that's what makes him great. It's great because he is defying stereotypes about what is sexy and, let's be honest, when he's commanding "all the haters" to "step the fuck off," who in their right mind could say that he isn't sexy? Especially these days—with Abercrombie models sporting nautical star tattoos and spiked coifs invading from all angles—we need Har Mar more than ever. Haters, step the fuck off, Har Mar is the real deal. **Jonah Bayer**

The Holy Ghost "Color Sympathy" (Clearly)- Although I don't listen to the radio I would if it played stuff like *Color Sympathy*. I'm not really sure what exactly color sympathy is, unless you're pitying a color because it sucks, like puke green. Either way, this album has nothing to do with color or religion, although there is a touch of sympathy in here for the subject of the songs. I'm in love with the title track and if you want a good climax, I recommend playing this album in reverse so you get to this one last. I think I got hooked somewhere between the Fugazi-influenced noisy guitar, the great melody and Christopher Dean Heine's strangely pleasing scratchy voice that crooned to me through my stereo. I think that if Ian MacKaye forgot The Holy Ghost wasn't political, they'd do him proud. **Rebecca Swanner**

Horror Show "Our Design" MCD (Deathwish)- Finally a band that grasps the benefits of using heavy, fast, and violent music to express the emotions of love, loneliness, and regret. All this time I thought I was the only one who understood how closely violence and love truly are. In a time where most hardcore bands are preaching and venting about who they hate, these guys have created a positive outlet to discuss love. See guys, you don't have to whine and whimper to get your point across. Horror Show play the same brand of hardcore that saturated the East Coast in the '90's, predictable breakdowns and in-your-face gang vocals. Considering the fact that some of the older wave of hardcore bands have either morphed into screamo-emo hacks or stoner rock ensembles, Horror Show are doing their thing at the right point in time. This stuff is vital, right now. The ten tracks remind me of older material from another band from the New Jersey turnpike, specifically Ensign. If old school hardcore done the way it has been since the late 1980's is your thing, then sell your emo collection and reach for this the next time your heart hurts. **Goon**

Hot Hot Heat "Make Up The Breakdown" (Sub Pop)- "Naked In The City Again," the first track, slaps you across the face with Hot Hot Heat's brand of sexy, cool rock and roll in the way that is making places like Brooklyn, NY famous these days. Then there's "Talk To Me, Dance With Me," a song so rhythmically infectious that one can't help but bob their head. The lyrics beg for you to chant along or at the very least mouth along to the words; this record is guaranteed to get a party going. **Hot Hot**

DESENSE YOUR HEART

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Heat sometimes draw on Rick Springfield and Cars-like pop-rock, combined with a little Ted Leo, and if you peel back the layers you'll even find some '60's britpop influence in there. This album is more straight-laced and fluffy than past HHH releases that were rougher around the edges— like last year's EP for Ohev Records— and there's a reason this band has been getting so much hype as of late. When it comes down to it, all the uber-hip indie rock coming out of Olympia, WA or New York these days is biting the less-than-polite rock a la the hip-swivel and cat-calling of The Make-Up or even Nation of Ulysees, but Hot Hot Heat do it in such a way that it feels like a respectful nod to that sound rather than outright stealing. Let's see if HHH can keep the momentum they've got right now. Rumor has it they just got an enormous advance from Warner Bros. for their next record, so all eyes are on the prize. **Celeste Tabora**

Jesus-eater "Step Inside My Death Ray" (Deathwish)- With a name that will make even the most relaxed Creed fans cringe Jesus-eater is the Messiah that has come to save us from the world of rehashed nu-metal. The band's sound rests somewhere in a musical purgatory between the desert rock riffing of Clutch and the hardcore fury of Sick of It All. Fronted by Shawn Brown of Swiz and Dag Nasty fame, Jesus-eater is one band that actually knows how to blend together rock and roll, metal, punk and hardcore. Listen to *Step Inside My Death Ray* and know what it's like to attend a hardcore show at an Idaho truck stop. It's funny that listening to this suddenly gives me the urge to drive a Mack truck and chew gobs of mint Skoal. The fourth song "Runaway Crying" is by far my choice pick. Its vocal threats of, "Break your legs/to prove you were here," and, "Break your legs to trace your footsteps," makes this song is as intimidating as a car jacking. The gravel-paved vocals and sludgy bass makes this one a necessity for long drives. This CD is required listening for fans of Helmet, Rollins Band, Jesus Lizard and Clutch. Jesus-eater cooks up ten songs that are as hearty as a fried chicken TV dinner. **Goon**

The John and Spencer Booze Explosion (Tiger Style)- This cleverly deceptive titled side project comes courtesy of John Atkins of 764-HERO, Spencer Moody of The Murder City Devils and Joe Plummer of The Black Heart Procession. Sounding nothing like any of their former bands nor the band they take their name from, these guys craft six eerie cover tunes from Lee Hazlewood to Ben Folds to Lou Reed. The opening track, "The Girls And The Dogs", originally a song by '50's French cabaret singer Jacques Brel, starts like some warped Broadway show tune and segues into the CD's more subdued tracks. Hazlewood's "Ladybird" showcases some excellent instrumentation with its lap steel guitar drones permeating the mix. The most appropriate cover however is Lou Reed's "Jesus" as this CD musically resembles the Velvets in its eerie atmospheric yet melodic tunes. While side projects are usually just mediocre vacations from the members' respective day jobs, this CD is indeed an exception and well worth giving a listen to for the opening track alone. **Aaron Lefkove**

The Kills "Black Rooster" EP (Dim Mak) & "Two Dollar Luck" (Rough Trade) LP- Apparently, this 2-person act includes Alison from Discount and someone named "Hotel" but by the first track you'd think this was just another lo-fi garage Olympia band with a female vocalist. By the second track, Hotel opens his mouth and by now a scratchy blues-based sound stumbles through the speakers. The Velvets are the natural comparison, just a little noisier and even more repetitive. Thankfully, the drugged-out haze and laconic feel are still intact. Alison certainly has the blues-ish vocal sass to do some good work over rugged, '60's B-flick styled tracks- perhaps this is something new for her as she goes by the name VV here. Fans of John Spencer will likely enjoy this one, which is pretty short yet descriptive enough. I'll bet the crusty, simple feel here is exactly what they wanted, but it just doesn't do much to keep me focused. However, track ten of *Two Dolar Luck*, "Fuck the People" makes T Rex look like hacks in comparison. If the band could craft a few more tunes as catchy as that one... then we'd be getting somewhere very very good. One live track is included on the EP. **dup**

Kind of Like Spitting "Bridges Worth Burning" (Barsuk)- Well well, someone pulled Ben Barnett out of the dumps and into the stratosphere. Kind of Like Spitting, a project Barnett started in

Madcap "East to West" (SideOne Dummy)- No, this is not the same Madcap, who in 1992 released a 12" on the now defunct Hip-Hop label Loud Records. These are the guys that you forgot to tip when they served you a hotdog at the after-show barbecue of the 2001 Warped Tour. I respect anybody who plays the same style of music that they grew up on. The music follows the Punk and Oi! guidelines set by legends, The Clash, Blitz and Cocksparrer, but with an added California flavor that's all their own. The jewel of the CD is track four, a cover of Blitz's "New Age." The song is played with the kind of heart, soul and intensity that can only be achieved from years of practicing in front of a mirror. Though Madcap's music is surely not groundbreaking in any respect, by doing what they do Madcap are able pass the torch of unfiltered punk rock to the new generation. The CD title, *East To West* is used tellingly here: the band mixes up everything from the soccer hooligan chanting of London's East End Skins to the melody of West Coasters Rancid, NOFX, and Bad Religion. The boys in Madcap have been making frequent visits to the Big Apple. By constantly touring with bands like The Bouncing Souls, H2O, The Explosion and Mest, Madcap have lived up to their end of the bargain by working hard. Now it's on you to make a contribution by catching a live show and purchasing the CD. **Goon**

Portland, OR, six albums and fourteen tours ago, consisted of Barnett and a guitar crooning soft, dramatic, morose boy-and-his-guitar songs for most of its existence. Somewhere along the way he picked up a drummer and a bassist and started to play in more of a rock and roll vibe—the music was clearly derived from punk through it all—to the point where the record's first song, "Passionate," actually sounds more like Thursday than it does Elliott Smith. The end result is wonderful. The twelve songs here sway and swoon their way all over the punk rock style map and show that Barnett is a genuine creative powerhouse. While some would be quick to throw Kind of Like Spitting in with other boy-and-his-guitar acts, most notably Dashboard Confessional and Bright Eyes, Barnett's music is far more crude and cathartic than DC and far more hook-oriented than Bright Eyes. The music is still somber, it's still tense, but not without a sense of hope. In summary, if you like your folk-punk a bit more interesting than anything on MTV and less I'm-going-to-slit-my-wrists-when-the-song-is-over, then I recommend you pick this record up right away. **Ross Siegel**

Kinski "Airs Above Your Station" (Sub Pop)- Maybe it is the mood I have been in lately. Perhaps I am maturing. Will I play early Entombed later and find it is too aggressive for me? Let's not get crazy now, it must be the mood I have been in. The mood? Without going into gory detail, sorry folks, I can't explain it. However, it seems the contents of Kinski's *Airs Above Your Station* can. A mostly instrumental album, *Airs Above Your Station*, reaches truly lethargic lows, but has no compunction about picking up the pace to rock it steady, keeping on with darker, and hauntingly atmospheric melody. This album gives me "feelings". I don't know what that means either- but trust me, whatever it means, it works. I enjoy this album thoroughly, and I firmly believe it has appeal to anyone that has the ability to feel music. Sure, Kinski is kind of artsy-fartsy, but as far as I can tell, far from phony or pretentious—and believe me, if per chance I am wrong and have been duped, they hide their sincerity's shortcomings very well. Fool me and you can definitely fool the world a few times over. All right, all right, I am going to listen to Entombed now. **Joe Vespa**

Knives Out "Heartburn" (Deathwish)- Comprised of current and ex-members of American Nightmare and I Hate You, Knives Out is the musical manifestation of a punk rock slasher flick. The songs all deal with death, killing and violence directed towards an ex-lover, which I'm sure all of us have felt at one point or another. Musically it's pretty straight up fast old fashioned hardcore punk that goes straight for the jugular with no metallic breakdowns or mosh parts needed. Reach for this, rather than The Cure, the next time your heart gets dragged through the ringer. **Aaron Lefkove**

Knockout "Searching for Solid Ground" (Fearless Records)- After listening to this album I got to doing a little math. If you live in

the suburbs, there is an 87 percent chance that a pop-punk band that sounds exactly like Knockout is practicing in a basement less than two blocks away from you at this very moment. Whether I like it or not, kids all over the country have embraced songs about girls, and not about killing or burying them, but about missing them and wishing that they would come back. I totally support young kids going out and starting bands but I have heard the same song, about the same 17 year-old girl too many times. Now you may be saying to yourself that I'm just a bitter old tough guy who doesn't remember what it's like to be fifteen. Well my response to that is you're right and fuck you. All this album managed to do was make me mad and if I ever hear it again it'll be because I'm at the mall. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to go stage dive onto kids that aren't as big as me. **Stan Horaczek**

Knuckle Sandwich "Nice" (Resurrection A.D.)- Maybe it's because these guys are from New Jersey, or maybe I simply confused them with Billy Club Sandwich, but I was expecting this CD to be from a bunch of Fury of Five and Sworn Enemy roadies who left to create their own tough guy fiasco. Well I guess it has taken me twenty-five years to learn not to judge a book by its cover. Musically the CD can be compared to later Bad Religion, The Offspring, and Vision. While Anti-Flag have no problem condemning the nation, these guys see a value in praising America. The lead off track, "American Song," is a patriotic tribute to Ronnie Reagan, Bubba Clinton and George Dubya. "I Want More" demonstrates the band's reluctance towards becoming just another New Jersey middle class nine to five. Give Knuckle Sandwich a round of applause for preventing you from becoming a schmooch! The real gem is track eight, "Show Me The Rock," a call to arms for heavy metal fans to swear their allegiance to Ronnie James Dio and Dokken. With such motivating lyrics as "dust off your boots and your winged horn salute/grow back your mullet and wear your leather and chains in the name of Ronnie James Dio," it's difficult not to show these guys the respect that they deserve. **Goon**

Latterman "Turn Up the Punk, We'll be Singing" (Traffic Violation)- One should always be a bit skeptical of any album with the word "punk" in the title. Judging from past experiences, records proclaiming how "punk" they are usually come off as anything but that. With all this in mind, Latterman already had one strike against them and had to prove that much more just to win me over. In spite of an overwhelming predisposition to not like these guys, this may in fact be my favorite of the recent crop of bands hailing from the current rock mecca that is Long Island, NY. The easiest comparison here would be Avail meets fellow Long Islanders Silent Majority. Not quite full fledged by-the-numbers hardcore, not quite emo, Latterman mix all of these with generous amounts of straight punk and power pop, while always reminding you why you got into the music in the first place. The Do It Yourself ethic of relying on a tightly knit circle of friends and fellow bands seems to be the underlying message in their music, which is admirable given the fact that every two bit basement band from the Island is being handed ass loads of cash in exchange for their musical integrity by all the majors these days. Bonus points for the Spinal Tap soundbite (on a side note, all that "punk" business is explained fully in the liner notes)! Support these guys. **Aaron Lefkove**

Liar's Academy "Trading My Life" (Equal Vision) EP- What is amazing is that Liar's Academy sports members of the great Strike Anywhere and the above-average Cross My Heart and they still manage to sound like The Gin Blossoms. Incredible, right? If you listen to Strike Anywhere, comparisons to Avail or Verbal Assault come through readily, but second-rate bar rock, like that found on this CD, is hardly to be expected. Equal Vision must have a lot of spare pocket change from all those Saves the Day CDs. Have a fun trip on the way to the middle, guys. **Ross Siegel**

Merauder "Bluetality" (Century Media)- This is a New York City dentist's dream. *Bluetality* is heavy and pissed, and there is no reason why someone wouldn't kick another's teeth out while listening to this album. Merauder retains NYC Hardcore integrity, while slightly pushing the boundaries and delving into what some may deem the Nu Metal arena— just enough to attract teenage mall metallers, but not so much that long time fans, or exclusive scene kids will feel they have been sold out. Fans of

DEATH BY STEREO

serious tough guy mosh, new and old, have no excuse not to add Merauder's newest to their collection of CD's that provide the soundtrack to what makes Dr. Rootcanal a very, very rich man. Solid. **Joe Vespa**

The Microphones "Mount Eerie" (K Records)- Today's music theory lesson will be in dynamics, and we will use The Microphones' *Mount Eerie* as our shining example of how to create musical tension and drama through volume and theme variation. "Universe" starts with cautious- almost timid- vocals, rinses, spins, repeats, and introduces distorted guitars and frenzied percussion, then fades out to a sad, melodic verse, complete with triple-tracked background vocals. The pounding percussion returns, only to be driven back by a chorus of angelic cooing that dances between the speakers until the song dies completely. The following song begins even as the previous one ends (as is the case for the entire 5-song EP) with the same choir, but soon the heavenly voices turn sinister above a low organ drone. An orgiastic tumble of moans, groans, retches, grumbles and growls rolls in on the momentum of both primitive congas and the distorted drums. "I'll strike you down and then / I'll strike you down again," sings Microphones main-man Phil Elvrum. Then, suddenly, the clouds part and the sun peeks out in the form of a comforting acoustic guitar. The back-and-forth themes can be a bit dizzying, but maybe that's because most popular music is so stylistically and dynamically homogenous. *Mount Eerie* may stretch your ears a little, but that just means they're growing. **Erin Anderson**

Midstates "Shadowing Ghosts" (Mental Monkey)- There aren't many albums that could serve as a soundtrack to a long walk through the fantasy books I read when I was five. Thinking about writing a movie that stars unicorns, fairies and other mythical creatures? Probably not, but this would be a nice accompaniment. Think I'm wrong? Go take a look at their website (midstatesmusic.com) then try to come back and tell me I'm wrong. With a languid, hopeful and whimsical style, this album has the sequel to *Legend* written all over it. There are discordant notes scattered everywhere throughout the album that sound like little gnomes. Songs like "You're So Far Away" have a *Dark Side of the Moon* touch to them, as it gets loud then drops off back into dreamland. Interestingly, the romantic and practical lyrics ("Don't Bake Gin" for instance) make me think that although the lead singer might be a little strange, he's certainly more balanced than other more serious musicians, like Morrissey, who I can do without. **Rebecca Swanner**

Mike V. & The Rats (Indecision) EP- Remember when hardcore was just punk rock played a little faster and with a bit more brash attitude? C'mon, think back before Hatebreed tricked all those kids into thinking they're *not* playing metal, before Chris Carrabba stole the look and thrust it upon the MTV masses, back to the time of Suicidal Tendencies and Black Flag and skateboards and 40 oz. bottles of malt liquor, back when being hardcore didn't mean singing whiny emo songs about your last breakup. Now that's fucking HARDcore!!!! If any of that appeals to you then check this out. Five-hard-as-nails songs that sound like classic Suicidal Tendencies (before they played funk) and other skatepunk bands of that era that put the HARD back in hardcore. By the way these guys are fronted by pro skateboarder Mike Vallely. Fast. Hard. To the point. No emo. **Aaron Lefkove**

The Mishaps "Get Away Volume" (Scissor Records) EP- This is a very good beginning for a band that needs to refine its sound a bit more. Right now this crude recording—strange for an album done at Washington DC's famed Inner Ear Studios—showcases the band's catchy street punk sound, reminiscent of The Misfits or early Social Distortion. Although the drum parts shuffle a bit more than is necessary and the guitars are so fuzzed-out that discerning specific pitches is difficult, The Mishaps are a band with a lot of potential. Let's just hope they bother to get out on the road and promote themselves. **Ross Siegel**

The Mountain Goats "Tallahassee" (4AD)- The tale of a Tallahassee house fallen into sad disrepair and its occupants, a co-dependent, alcoholic couple who die together of their sickness gets a tender, cinematic treatment at the able hands (and imagination) of The Mountain Goats. Songwriter John Darnielle

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Turbonegro "Apocalypse Dudes" (Epitaph)- The motherfucker has landed once again, this time courtesy of the good folks at Epitaph. This album's been available for four or five years already through everyone from Sympathy For The Record Industry to Bitzcore and if you don't already have it then you're pretty much a worthless sack of shit. For those not in the know this is the greatest rock opus ever composed. This is the album that made Rhinestone-Homo-Rock-N-Roll a household name. There was no Beatles. There was no Rolling Stones. There was only Turbonegro and their loyal minions of Turbojugend! Take the best (and I mean *BEST*) parts of The Ramones, Dictators, New York Dolls, and Heartbreakers and add a little, no actually make that a *lot* of homo-eroticism *a la* Tom of Finland and you may have an inkling of an idea of the sounds of Death Punk. Every track is a guaranteed chart topping smash hit—"Prince of the Rodeo", "Good Head", "Back To Dungaree High"—all masterpieces. Now that the reigning kings of mall punk will be making this album accessible to any and every retail outlet there is no excuse why you don't have a copy, and with the new album "Scandinavian Leather" just around the corner don't be the last to do so. Lube up and prepare your ass for a Turbo invasion! The motherfucker has landed. **Aaron Lefkove**

takes the true story of the tragically dysfunctional spouses and their home, and builds a song cycle around conversations the two might have had and fights they might have fought inside the walls: "People say friends don't destroy one another / What do they know about friends?" To heighten the drama, Darnielle lets the house become a silent character—a witness to the chaos and disorder within. It's a beautifully wrought set of acoustic pieces, stripped-down (though slicker than TMG's usual stereo-recorded fare) and strangely (yet ingeniously) upbeat for the subject matter. But as interesting as the music is by itself, the predominance of the story keeps the instrumentation in the background, more as a method of delivery than an equal partner to the lyrics. Darnielle's expertly tongue-in-cheek poetry takes on a new depth when set against the sober backdrop of the story itself. Tragedy is never compelling when all is gloom and doom—it's the nuggets of humor and bitter sweetness that make a sad story worth telling, and there's nobody better to tell this story than The Mountain Goats. (For extra info on the house and its erstwhile dwellers, see the label's web site.) **Erin Anderson**

Nakatomi Plaza "Private Property" (Immigrant Sun)- A new CD, sort of, from a band with ex-members of De La Hoya. The first 7 tracks are culled from an EP of the same name released on Gunboat Records and the last 3 are from various splits and compilations the band has been on. It's surprising that these guys have been going so strong with relatively no hype given the fact that their contemporaries in Taking Back Sunday, The Movielife, and Brand New have fast become the darlings of every major label record exec's eye. The songs here still seem a bit rough around the edges, as if they're not sure whether they're more comfortable playing the melodic or hard stuff. Unfortunately the whiny emo vocals don't work so well over the driving hardcore riffs but with a little more polish on their delivery these guys may be the next band to watch out for. The Long Island sound flows further and further. **Aaron Lefkove**

Neil Perry/A Day's Refrain split (Robotic Empire)- The first thing I noticed about this release was that it came on one of those mini CD's, you know the one's that are like 3 inches in diameter. As soon as I pushed play I started to wonder how they crammed all that heaviness onto something so small. I'm not sure which band was up first as both sound pretty much identical but I will say this: Both bands suffer from an acute indecisiveness of whether they want to play screechy Converge-inspired metalcore or droney insipid math rock. If the music on this little CD had to take a physical shape I'd say it would look like an hourglass with a big treacherous opener and closer book-ending meager and uninspired melodic crap that sounds musically and lyrically like it's being played by a bunch of 14 year olds. I know that there are two different bands on this CD, but each band in and of themselves sound like two totally different bands, thus it seems as if we actually have four bands on this CD, so if we do the math

we get 4 bands playing half inspiring half mediocre songs but in all actuality it's really just two bands playing 6 songs, not bad for a teenie little CD with around 10 minutes of music on it. You figure it out. **Aaron Lefkove**

Onalaska "To Sing For Nights" (Dim Mak)- This is pretty good slow, introspective alt-country rock with an indie vibe. It's not great though. If someone sent this record to me and said, "Hey, Ross, will you put out this record? We think the kids will go crazy for it," I'd reply, "Hal Sorry kid, the songs are boring, they don't go anywhere, and this seems a bit thrown together to boot." Then they would say, "You sure? Trust us, the kids will love it." I'd think to myself, "My grandfather, who liked Willie Nelson and mostly likely would have liked a band like the Weakerthans or even Billy Bragg, probably would have been bored by this, so I doubt the kids would find much interest in it." Then the members of Onalaska would move on to another label, who knew that they represented ex and current members of Botch, Sharks Keep Moving, Minus the Bear, and Kill Sadie, and that label would have sold a few thousand copies based on the members of Onalaska's accolades. No, seriously, Onalaska aren't bad. The more I listen to this CD the more I like it. But the songs don't seem fleshed out or scrutinized enough. Rather, the songs seem like they were probably rushed in the studio in order to put out an album of slow, introspective alt-country with an indie vibe. Not bad, but not great. **Ross Siegel**

Oneida/Liars "Atheists, Reconsider" (Arena Rock)- Any time a music critic gives a recording an unfavorable review, there will inevitably be some fans—if there are any at all—of the artists in question who will accuse that critic of "not getting it." One could accuse me of not quite getting the big deal over bands like the Locust or The White Stripes. In actuality, it's not that I don't get it, it's simply that what they're doing doesn't interest me... even though it obviously interests so many others. In the case of Liars and Oneida, two Brooklyn, New York bands who each contribute three tracks to this split, I just don't get it. The music here is chaotic and visceral, but... well, it simply isn't very good. There aren't any hooks to draw the listener in, the textures are a bit too abrasive to elicit any sort of positive emotional response, and the depraved screaming vocals do little to make me want to give this more than only a few spins. While I have seen Oneida live and thought they put on a great show, in the vein of a band like Lightning Bolt or other conceptual art-rockers, and I've heard that Liars put on an even better representation in the flesh, I still can't quite find anything here to sink my teeth into, much less anything that warrants a trip to the store to pick this up. **Ross Siegel**

Open Hand "The Dream" (Trustkill)- I first experienced Open Hand on the tape deck of a good friend from California who happens to run a successful record label to which Open Hand sent a demo of their early material. I was quite impressed by their seamless blend of hardcore crunch and skate-punk sincerity, not to mention commercial appeal. For a few years Open Hand was that band I'd hear about that kept waiting for the inevitable major label deal that apparently never came their way. So, they took an alternate route and put this hodge-podge collection of songs out on Trustkill. All I think now, a few years after I first heard them, is that they are far less exciting than when I was initially exposed to them, and bands like label-mates Hopewell or Thursday play this style of melodic, emotional, hardcore much much better than Open Hand. Sure they're very competent musicians who play music that is as interesting as it is driving, but the songs sound hastily thrown together—an amalgam of good parts juxtaposed rather than cohesive songs from start to finish. Right now Open Hand sound like they need to write a bunch more tunes before they get that major label deal that will surely come their way. This collection is neither overly catchy nor overly inspired. On second look, years after my first, Open Hand is relegated to the mediocre category as this tends to be pretty mediocre rock and roll with its eyes clearly set on mainstream obscurity. Sorry guys. **Ross Siegel**

Owen (Polyvinyl)- Don't be fooled by the nauseatingly-sweet painting of the boy and his chickens on the album's cover. This is a horribly depressing album. So much so that I turned it off in the middle of the first song ("Nobody's Nothing") the first couple times I attempted to listen to it because I couldn't handle vocalist Mike

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Cursive "The Ugly Organ" (Saddle Creek)

Kinsella (of American Football) singing, "You only have yourself to blame/it's a shame," over and over and over. Do not listen to this song if you've just been through any traumatic experience. It will send you running for the Bic razorblades or that solitary bottle of aspirin in your medicine cabinet. Kinsella does, however, have a beautiful haunting voice, although his crooning makes him sound like a suicidal Billy Corgan. My roommate and I have a theory that even Belle and Sebastian could kick this guy's ass, considering he'd probably be quietly sobbing the whole time. I was thankful for the drum machine in "Everyone Feels Like You" (another cheerful song title) as it was the only mood break in the entire album and his relentless, angsty depression made me wonder how long it's been since this dude's had a date. Unless your major is self-pity, or sleep, I don't recommend buying this one. **Rebecca Swanner**

The Postal Service "Give Up" (Sub Pop)- The Postal Service is a newly-formed act uniting technogeek Jimmy Tamborello of Dtel and Strictly Ballroom, and Ben Gibbard of Death Cab For Cutie. These guys make music by recording stuff on their own and sending tapes to each other (hence the clever name). And the music they make is, well, totally wonderful. This record brings together the few elements of electroclash I find redeeming and lets them get swallowed in a mess of well thought-out beeps, beats, and harmony. Pretty much every song here is a keeper and some are so good that you'll have to play them again four times before you can go to sleep. This is the best record I've gotten all year. You will definitely see The Postal Service receive further coverage in *Law of Inertia*. **Ross Siegel & Nick Powers**

The Promise "Believer" (Indecision)- Well I already gave a pretty damning review to the two song joint these guys did for Deathwish so now it's time to be a bit more objective albeit a little anticlimactic. Musically I've always been a fan of this style of hardcore—the style I grew up on—fast, hard, brutal music that makes you want to start a circle pit in your bedroom. These guys all did hard time in bands such as Earth Crisis, Turmoil and One King Down and their Syracuse, NY hardcore pedigree shows through in the band's sound. The singer's raspy bellow reminds me a lot of Lou from Sick Of It All. Musically the band comes across much in the vein of classic NYHC bands such as SOIA, Killing Time, Madball and Breakdown. The lyrics still have a bit of the self righteous straight edge tone to them but overall I think they've broadened their horizons past sxe to more uncharted waters such as friendship, loyalty, betrayal and beatdowns. Somebody will probably get a broken nose while demonstrating their style during next year's Hellfest set. **Aaron Lefkove**

Rainer Maria "Long Knives Drawn" (Polyvinyl)- It's funny what New York City does to people when they move here. First they try to give the air of having lived in one of the five boroughs for their entire existence—transplants from the Midwest are so gauche—then they completely forget that there is another world outside of New York City, especially one that they once lived in. Rainer Maria, not-so-recent emigrants from Madison, WI, have produced an intelligent and interesting work with *Long Knives Drawn*, one that is far more palatable than their last two albums and last few EPs. But what I notice right up front is all the New York City references sprinkled throughout the album that seem to like a not-so-subtle attempt to wipe their Madison days from the slate and become full-fledged New Yorkers (examples: songs with lines like waking up in the Lower East Side or riding on the BQE). What is most striking about this record is that this may be the first release I've heard from Rainer Maria on which Caithlin De Marrais, who monopolized the band's vocals with the mediocre *Look Now Look Again*, sounds like she truly belongs behind the microphone and is confident with her position. Other than an embarrassing moment in which Caithlin bellows, "huh huh huh hold me," she sings boldly and articulately in a manner never heard from this band. Combine that with sparse bass-drums-guitar and *Long Knives Drawn* is a strong outing for these New Yorkers. **Ross Siegel**

Ramallah "But A Whimper" (Bridge Nine)- I sincerely hope the Palestinian people and the Israeli left have a better artistic spokesperson than Rob Lind, progenitor of Ramallah. It's too bad that a very serious conflict like that in the Middle East has to be reduced to a ridiculous nu-metal cum Madball/Biohazard rip-off

Ruins "Tzomborgha" (Ipecac Recordings)

Nowhere League to this? Somewhere along the line the rebellious spirit that was the catalyst for the movement must have gotten thrown out the window. Riddlin' Kids bring it with 14 originals and one REM cover that show little if any diversion from anything else being played on the radio or on the side stage at the Warped Tour. **Aaron Lefkove**

Cursive "The Ugly Organ" (Saddle Creek)- Cursive have finally done it. They've finally taken a small band from some blackhole like Omaha, NE, and turned it into one of the most original and dynamic indie rock outfits in the country. If their first record was overly reminiscent of Archers of Loaf, and their most recent EP, *Burst And Bloom*, reminded us of Jawbox, then this is certainly Cursive's first record that stands on its own as having created a unique and cohesive sound. Luckily for Tim Kasher and company, the rest of the American indie rock world has noticed and Cursive's exploratory journey has been well documented at this point. On the album's first song, the dynamic "some red handed slight of hand," Kasher sings, "so why do you think I'm any different / I've been making money off my indifference," as if that does not betray his feelings on his new found success, he croons "my ego's like my stomach / it keeps shitting what I feed it." Well Tim, if abrasive, catchy, and dynamic punk rock like this is any indication, your stomach has a lot to digest these days. Good job! **Ross Siegel**

like this. I'm all for politics in my art, I require it in fact, but this... this is ridiculous. Bone-head lyrics and arcane political leanings do not supersede intelligence. Then again, what can you expect from a guy whose *nom de plume* is "White Trash Rob." Stick to Blood For Blood big guy. **Ross Siegel**

Raised Fist "Dedication" (Burning Heart)- I think that I have finally found the perfect CD to keep in my alarm clock radio. I love the sound of straight ahead hardcore in the morning. *Dedication* is loud and fast right from the opening drum lick and barely slows down until it's over. I have never had any objections with loud and fast but listening to an entire album of songs so fast the drummer probably only knows one rhythm (bleast beat) can be a little exhausting. The one thing that really stands out about this record though, is the way in which these guys have managed to construct some substantially danceable breakdowns without the tough guy template that it seems many bands have been using lately. An added bonus here is that once you get past the initial adrenaline rush you'll discover some surprisingly intelligent and non-cliché lyrics. If you want to know what they are though you're probably going to have to check the liner notes due to the singer's overly excited delivery. I have to admit that this album gets some bonus points in my book because it was responsible for seriously upsetting the girls that live next door to me three times, which is even worse than when I got a hold of the last Dillinger Escape Plan joint. Overall, this is a solid record. Raised Fist has been playing the same brand of ultra-fast, non-melodic, hardcore since 1993 and I'm glad that they haven't changed. **Stan Horaczek**

Reggie And The Full Effect "Under The Tray" (Vagrant) When this act put out their first album, it was all about the hype of so-and-so from the Get Up Kids. It all seemed to be a project based on so much more schtick than substance, that it was hard to understand why it was so well received. This record, while still sounding like an obsessive weekend spent alone in a fully-equipped studio, has some pretty fun tracks that are all eclectic and almost tongue-in-cheek. There's an entirely goofy synth-pop (kids born in 1986 will call it "80's") track complete with false Brit accent, nutty audio samples entitled "Drunk Girl At The Get Up Kids Show", an entirely stupid beatnik lounge track entitled "F.O.O.D.", and various other exercises in ridiculousness. But somewhere in the midst of this self-absorbed mess, there's several tracks that rise WELL above "sounds good mashed in the middle of a mixtape" status. Songs like "Happy V-Day" and "Congratulations Smack & Kat" manage to overload a ton of unexpected punk, emo, metal and synth tones into one sparkingly good post-pop song. The melodies are a big part of this formula when it works, and as odd as it might seem, the handful of times when it does makes this worth hearing if not worth picking up. **dup**

Riddlin' Kids "Hurry Up and Wait" (Columbia)- I spied this slipped in between a couple of Dr. Strange reissues and the new Opeth CD when I got my stack of music to review for this issue. Those *Law of Inertia* editors think they're real sly giving me this stuff for review. However, this brings up quite an interesting point: how did punk rock make the linear progression from, say, the *Barricaded Suspects* compilation or the Stooges or even the Anti

Ruins "Tzomborgha" (Ipecac Recordings)- While Japanese imports, The Boredoms and Shonen Knife, basked in the mainstream success of Perry Farrell's Lollapalooza festival, fellow countrymen Ruins remained in the underground, mostly appreciated by other musicians. The two-man team of a drummer/vocalist and a bass player create sounds that are in the same technical boat as King Crimson, John Zorn, and Frank Zappa. The thrashier songs bring to mind early Mr. Bungle and Primus. Track fourteen, "Black Sabbath Medley Reversible," finds the eclectic duo paying homage to Ozzy and company with a unique rendition of Black Sabbath hits. Besides the fact that I can't understand a word that the Japanese twosome are saying their lyrical rants are as entertaining as Kabuki theatre. Take it from Ipecac Records owner, Mike Patton—the man who is responsible for bringing you Mr. Bungle, Phantoms and Tomahawk—I don't think would steer us wrong. **Goon**

Scissorfight "Potential New Agent For Unconventional Warfare" (Tortuga) EP- This Boston act seems to have been around for ages and finally seems to be getting a deserved due for their punch-in-the-kidneys, bass fueled garage metal. The first track, "Hex," is a faster, more hardcore affair that stands ahead of the rest of the tracks with workhorse drumming and some good backup vocals. The remaining 4 tracks find a pace that's traditional for this style, but they clearly aren't a few kids who just are trying to copy their Deep Purple albums. It's got the riffs locked tight as lug nuts, the sludge tempos that motor their way through the songs and vocals that sink into your brain like the glare of an oppressively sunny day. There's something a bit different about their sound that seems to push a bit further than whatever Fu Manchu is doing these days—more guitar crunch, better production maybe, a few breaks here and there. The point is that they're doing something right. For what's renowned as a "rock town" it's nice to see acts like Scissorfight and Roadsaw putting out some damn good material. **dup**

The Sea And Cake "One Bedroom" (Thrill Jockey)- This Chicago band has supplied us with so many pretty albums (six so far) in the past few years of their life span (close to 10 years). They've become an indie rock force to be reckoned with. Especially with members watched so carefully within the indie rock community like Sam Prekop (vocals and guitars), Erik Clidge (bassist & painter), John McEntire (drums & SOMA studios owner, engineer, producer), and Archer Prewitt (guitar & solo artist, patiner, Sof Boy comics creator). *One Bedroom* is yet another example of the Sea & Cake's prowess for music. The instrumental "Four Corners" opens up the album—showing that the band hasn't gone off the pop-deep end in needing vocals for every minute of every song. Prekop's vocals are more lucid than in their past recordings, though it doesn't stick out like an auditory sore thumb. A first for the Sea and Cake is their cover of "The Sound and Vision." They started tinkering with the David Bowie song five years ago and for the recording the band invited the beautiful vocals of The Navin Brothers (also known as the Aluminum Group). Overall, this album is a natural progression from their last release, "Oui." It is exactly what a long-time fan would expect of the Sea and Cake. At the same time, it is what a newcomer to the world of Sea and Cake would fall in love with. **Celeste Tabora**

Shipping News "Three-Four" (Quarterstick)- Haunting a listener through music may well be the goal of many songwriters, but the task itself is no simple matter of compiling a number of beautifully strange melodies and spooky sound effects. Part of what makes Shipping News' *Three-Four* so convincingly creepy is that many of the vocal and instrumental themes are relatively good-natured on their own. The sum of the parts, however, is an unsettling whole that evokes a very precarious, ill-fated setting. Interestingly, the album itself is an amalgamation of three different EPs (*RMSN EP 1: Carrier*, *RMSN EP 2: Sickening Bridge* and *MSN EP 3: Variegated*, all released separately between fall 2001

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and fall 2002). The themes throughout are simple and repetitive, almost like an *étude* for a music student. This straightforward structural reinforcement adds a weighty feel to the songs' often already oppressive, full, and thick instrumental parts. "Paper Lanterns" is an example of one of the album's more dynamic moments: Heavy distortion on vocals, guitars and drums meets with a shrill and insistent organ part that gets more disjointed as the song plays on. The Pink Floyd-like fluidity of the vocals gives way to jarring staccato keyboard effects and samples. It's a stunning record that illustrates how arresting—and, yes, haunting—music can be when attention is paid to theme and structure and poetry. What a concept... album. **Erin Anderson**

The Skulls "Therapy For the Shy" (Dr. Strange)—Dr. Strange champions the return of yet another legendary but long since forgotten L.A. punk band (see my review of Channel 3's new one for further info!). Eleven fast-as-fuck songs that call to mind bands like The Jonses, The Avengers, and The Saints. Not much has changed for these guys, they still play the same snotty punk-infused rock & roll that when they led the pack in '77, but unlike many other aging rockers (listen to the new Mick Jagger solo album for further proof) the tunes don't sound trite, contrived or watered down. Not bad for a bunch of punks that are the same age as my old man. It looks as if front man Billy Bones is the only member still alive and kicking from their original incarnation, however the addition of The Adict's ex-bass player and a couple other guys who were probably still swimming around in their daddy's ball sack during The Skulls' first reign of terror has only tightened up the band's sound. Fans of classic '77 punk bands of the UK, Aussie, American and Scandinavian varieties will eat this one up! Big ups for The Saints cover. **Aaron Lefkove**

Small Brown Bike / The Casket Lottery (Second Nature)—These collaborative splits seem to always be a disappointment, and this CD is no exception. For example, the idea of the TransChamps EP (Fucking Champs and Trans Am) sounded great in theory, but the end result was lesser than either of the bands. But at least those bands sounded different. The biggest problem with this split is that, stylistically, Small Brown Bike and the Casket Lottery may as well be the same band, which begs the question, what's the point of this thing? It's sort of like a collaboration between myself and my clone who is cryogenically frozen until 2049—if you can't tell the difference (uh, except for the 50 year age gap) doesn't that defeat the purpose? Unlike that analogy, the first song here, "Wrong Hometown" is excellent (probably because it sounds like a classic Small Brown Bike song), but unfortunately the rest of this, save their cover of Bowie's "Under Pressure," are album throwaways if I've ever heard any. I'm sure this was fun to write and record, but I don't think that anyone outside of these bands really needs to hear it. Sorry, dudes. **Jonah Bayer**

Snowdogs "Deep Cuts, Fast Remedies" (Victory)—When bad bands turn worse! I'm not sure if these guys are trying to make rock with a hardcore edge or hardcore with a rock edge but whatever they're doing it doesn't work and they just end up sounding like shit. **Aaron Lefkove**

Somehow Hollow "Broken Wings and Busted Halos" (Victory)—I don't get offended easily. In fact, I can't remember the last time I was actually offended by a piece of art—and yes, that's counting *The Ladies Man* movie. Why am I telling you this? Because Somehow Hollow's *Broken Wings and Busted Halos* offends me, deeply, to the core of my being. Let's back up a bit. The press release prominently claims that this band rose from the ashes of Canadian emo/hardcore pioneers Grade—not only is that statement mostly a lie, it's tarnishing the name of what was once an amazing band. Personally, Grade's first two releases on Second Nature Recordings—1997's *And Such Is Progress* and '98's *Separate the Magnets*—are almost single-handedly responsible for getting me beyond my meathead hardcore phase, and following Grade and tour mates Hot Water Music around the Midwest in '98 with my pal Dan is one of my fondest high school memories. But then I went to college and Grade graduated to Victory records. The band released a decent record called *Under the Radar* and an awful album of B-sides that never should have seen the light of day, entitled *The Embarrassing Beginning*. My

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Kissing Chaos "Enter With A Bullet" (Fueled By Ramen)

EP-Man, remember when intense, emotional, punk rock could rely on some adeptly sung vocals and a few guitar hooks to create intense, emotional songs instead of hyperbolizing their way through the music. Late I find that too many bands are relying on the clichés Thursday set forth for us a few years back (although they weren't cliché the first go round) like screamed choruses to match sweetly sung melodies; huge dynamic choruses; and an atmosphere so tense it almost felt a bit contrived. Sure, Kissing Chaos are borrowing some aspects of a few bigger bands today, most notably Thursday, Finch, and At the Drive-in, but that's not to say that they haven't crafted a fine release here, because they have, and this EP is really worth checking out. The recording is crude, the lyrics are urgent, and the listener can just picture the band rocking and rolling their way all over an Austin, Texas stage. This is a good CD and we should expect big things from this band. And, judging by what my friends over at a few of the more progressive major labels say, big things for Kissing Chaos may be closer than we think. **Ross Siegel**

sentiment exactly, dudes. Then their guitarist Greg quit to form a generic Rancid-copy band called Jersey. Eventually, all the original members took his lead and left Grade, save their dynamic vocalist Kyle Bishop, who, even though he cut off his dreads and stopped screaming, essentially was Grade. Then after last year's disappointing *Headfirst Straight to Hell*, Kyle finally got a clue and the hired hands who were in Grade for all of ten minutes formed this shitty band upon Grade's demise. Somehow Hollow's singer sounds like a weak imitation of Rob from The Get Up Kids (not, Matt, the lead singer of The GUKs) while the music sounds like every other over-produced emo band out there. The only thing that remotely sounds like Grade is the chromatically flowing octave chords, but even those are forced and hardly original. Other differences? Glad you asked. *Separate the Magnets*' layout was a collage based on the periodic table that was a work of art into itself; Somehow Hollow has some anorexic-looking girl with stupid black angel wings that looks like it belongs in a high school yearbook. Kyle Bishop sang about everything from conspiracy theories to scientific theories in his lyrics; Somehow Hollow prefer sappy limericks that take emo's dumbed-down cheesiness to new heights, or should I say lows? ("I watch the sun go down on this beautiful town/it's another day without you around.") But I guess the biggest reason that I'm offended is because these four chumps are taking something great and selfishly using it to hype a band that embodies everything that is wrong with punk rock today—is that subtle enough, eh? You fucking thieves. **Jonah Bayer**

Songs:Ohia "The Magnolia Electric Co." (Secretly Canadian)

Sometimes life can be darker than the back room of your neighborhood dive bar, and just as crowded with characters you'd rather see through the bottom of a bottle than look straight in the mug. So instead of feigning a blind spot right where the weirdo next to you starts making eyes in your direction, slide off your stool, sidle over to the jukebox, and hope the selections include something from Songs:Ohia's *Magnolia Electric Co.*, a near-perfect drown-your-sorrows collision of sly lap steel, migraine-inducing kick drums, and lyrics so tender they practically fall right off the bone. "Why put a new address on the same old loneliness?" sighs songwriter/singer/guitarist Jason Molina, who assembles a highly capable cast of desperados to add mandolin, organ, violin, and even lead vocals to the album (which was originally assembled as a double CD along with *The Pyramid Electric Co.*). Why, indeed? During its brighter moments, *Magnolia* rocks out with a solid blues twang and a fair amount of attitude. But it's the quieter, sadder songs that really sparkle with an unusually soft glow that's worthy of a little extra attention. Maybe another round, bartender—it's Unhappy Hour. **Erin Anderson**

Staring Back "On" (Lobster)—Bright power-pop vocals, slightly technical guitarwork, very mid-tempo end product. I've got to admit, you know you're not keeping on top of things when it seems that every record of note comes out on a record label you've never heard of. Lobster? What choice do I have but to digress. This reminds me of a pretty damn good band from Detroit called Hoarse with a more-than-casually punk informed approach to the

power-pop sound. I acknowledge that I'm a sucker for yearning vocals and some guitar crunch and this delivers the wimp-rock in spades. Nowadays it's pleasant when a band eschews the tattered pop-punk sound for a more vocal, slower guitar-pop sound. I always hope for the best with acts like this, imagining small core fanbases keeping a presence at shows but not much more usually happens. This is pretty good material that most people sadly won't buy. **dup**

Stavesacre (Nitro)—I guess my problem with "spirit-filled rock and roll"—the industry's way of saying Christian pop music—is that it all seems so didactic. It's like, "look at me, I don't do drugs or have sex and I'm very very pure, as pure as a rockstar can be, so you should do like me and we'll all be one happy family." Now, does that sound like music you would like to listen to on a daily basis? Honestly, I'd have to pass on that. Fortunately, a lot of the music from Tooth and Nail Records, like Stavesacre, whose last three records were for T&N, manages to keep their spirit, but thankfully focus more on the music than on getting the listener to go to church. Stavesacre may be crossing the line a bit. They tend to be pretty didactic at points, so much so that you question their motivation for playing rock music. But, the lyrics seem to recognize the singer's own insecurities and faults and do not ignore them in an arrogant fashion. Plus, the music tends to ask just as many questions as it does provide answers, which is refreshing to see. Plainly, what we really care about is the music, and in that department Stavesacre still need some work. The recording on this self-titled disc is very tight and very polished, but the music seems like it serves as a means to provide a message rather than a reason to get you out of your seat and on the dance floor; there are no guitar solos or huge drum fills. Rather, every instrument simply provides a backdrop for the vocals. Do you see what I'm getting at? If you like your music with a positive, if not didactic message, then you may be into this. If not, well, you'll find it good for a few listens and then happily sell it back to the record store at which you bought it. **Ross Siegel**

A Static Lullaby "And Don't Forget To Breathe" (Ferret)—If I hadn't already heard Glassjaw, Thursday, and the rest of the Ferret Music roster, then I would probably be flipping out over A Static Lullaby right now. By the time this CD—which, in the words of one record label executive, "will be a huge seller,"—found its way to my stereo, I began to grow a bit tired of the melodic hardcore coming out of California and Long Island. This style of hardcore is played by so many bands it's getting a bit old now. There's the melodic, technical hardcore guitars—all of which are ripped straight from Silent Majority's *Life Of A Spectator*—combined with vocals that alternate between polished crooning and lion's-roar screaming. If your band hopes for widespread success in today's punk world, incorporate these aspects of hardcore into your music and you too can get signed to Victory, Trustkill, Equal Vision, or... Ferret. **Jim Jameson**

Stereotyperider "Same Chords Same Songs..." (Suburban Home)

How anyone can brag about being ex-members of a band called Mandingo is beyond me. If you think Stereotyperider is a poor choice of monikers then you'll absolutely go crazy for the other name-brand band of which this band boasts ex-members: Adam's Alcoholics. Anyway, Stereotyperider are an interesting, if somewhat confusing listen. Musically, they're kind of a trainwreck—but I mean that in a pretty good way. They provide chaotic guitars that seem to move all over the fretboard and back again before the chorus has even kicked in, drums that make Keith Moon look like Ringo Starr, and vocals that do a good job of complimenting the madness underneath. Although there are frequent moments where the listener is left waving his arms, going, "wait, slow down, take a breather... then finish the song, guys" the music remains high-energy. I would say it's catchy too, but I think I'd have to give it another thirty listens for my mind to be able to predict what happens next in each song. Synopsis: Stereotyperider need to go into a basement and write 50 songs for their next record. Then re-write, re-write, and re-write some more. Finally, drop the worst 38 songs. At that point, Stereotyperider's hyperactive ambitions may be able to keep up with their hyperactive guitar playing. **Ross Siegel**

Steve Von Till. "If I Should Fall To The Field" (Neurot Recordings)—Von Till's solo effort is a far cry from the songs

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that he creates in his main gig with Neurosis and their offshoot, Tribes of Nurot. The somber songs are reminiscent of Johnny Cash, Nick Cave and The Clash's "Straight To Hell." As a one-man show, Von Till sings and plays acoustic guitar, bass, organ and banjo. The songs are country-inspired acoustic narratives with a pinch of Americana rock, a la Hank Williams or Waylon Jennings. The poetic and at times haunting lyrics primarily deal with the issues of hard labor, hunting, and life in the plains and forest. The songs are depressing in the way that reminds me of John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. The use of a Hammond B3, fiddle and banjo lends an antique feel to the music. While most singer-songwriters interpret American music as a license to whine about women, this ten song CD captures a time when life was about working 12 hours in the field and drinking a glass of homemade whiskey. Track nine, "The Harpy," is an authentic display of the Von Till family jewels. It was recorded in 1961 by Steve's father and features a spoken testimony by his grandfather. Since most of us were not fortunate enough to have existed during the 1930's, '40's, and '50's, we missed out on the true essence of style and taste. This CD comes highly recommended. **Goon**

This Machine Kills / JR Ewing (Dim Mak) EP- This Machine Kills drops some impressive lyrical views on their track, "Take Back The Night," but the yelping, yowling vocals ruin this loud, aggressive lurching punk act. Next, "Booby Traps" is a mercifully short and confused exercise over a drum machine- at least the production of the first track was good. Apparently their 2 tracks are focused upon the idea of male privilege. The Norwegian JR Ewing mark an upswing with their tense and focused technical punk, as loud and feverish as TMK but much more successful and better sounding. Their first of two tracks is the best here, entitled "Panic", it manages to bring a lot of emotion into a overdriven punk track. Between that song and the "Dallas" audio sample from the intro to track 4, that's the cream of this release. This seems to be an unclear benefit/concept release that was also issued on 7" in 4 different European countries and on disc in Japan and the US. Not bad, but only one good track doesn't make this a keeper. JR Ewing is who I'd be looking out for. **dup**

Tiger Army "Early Years" (Hell Cat) EP- I think I'm one of the few Tiger Army fans that actually got to see the band with their original, crude line-up, highlighted by Adam Carson of AFI behind the drum-kit. Tiger Army, the brainchild of singer/guitarist Nick 13, has moved to slower, more textured compositions as of late, but here we get a bare-bones drum-bass-guitar sound that ranges from tunes clearly inspired by Elvis to more punk rock type stuff like The Damned or The Misfits. The end result is pleasing as a novelty and as a history lesson, but does not stand up to the formidable plateaus set by their last two records. Moreover, the cover of The Misfits' "American Nightmare" is not to be missed. **Ross Siegel**

Tiger Mountain "Analog Heads Gone French" (Lucky Cat)- While every head-up-their-ass music critic is lauding rock's triumphant return, there are those bands for whom it never actually went away. Those whose musical vocabulary is a virtual who's who of every 45 single this side of Chuck Berry. Comprised of ex-members of Girtoucher, The Brought Low, and Murphy's Law, Tiger Mountain's debut is a soulful concoction of each of their previous bands on top of a heaping helping of British Invasion swagger, style and attitude a la *Exile On Main Street* era Stones. I know that may sound strange, but believe me it works. While they're not appropriating every Television and Heartbreakers riff (or their wardrobe for that matter) as their own, like many other bands coming out of NYC right now, Tiger Mountain have struck a chord that's been stylistically absent from too many bands as of late— good rock and roll played with no pretty boy hipster pretenses. The CD also includes a video directed by pimp daddy stedi-cam operator Stedi G, most notable for being the man behind the cam for every bling bling rap video on BET these days. That shit's hot son. **Aaron Lefkove**

Tora! Tora! Torrance! "Get Into It" (The Militia Group)- Some bands are primed and deserving of a packed gig at the local bar, but are still a ways from justifying a CD release. It's become so easy over the last few years to record and release an album and as a result, bands are spending less time strengthening

got to be kidding me. This is a shameless carbon copy of all the bubble gum, popcorn "punk" bands of today. You are kidding, right? **Joe Vespa**

V/A "Barricaded Suspects" (Dr. Strange)- Yet another long forgotten classic revisited by the evil Dr. Strange. This time it's the *Barricaded Suspects* compilation. Pick this up for a glimpse of what it was like in the days before punk was diluted and conveniently pre-packaged and peddled at the local Hot Topic. 22 cuts from 20 bands of classic, obscure, low-fi early '80's punk. Red Tide, Peace Corpse, and Septic Death— featuring the legendary illustrator Pushead, who also contributed the cover art— all make appearances as well as 17 other bands you've never heard of but are all well worth checking out. One track of noteworthy mention is The Dull's "I Hate the Motorcyclist" Give it a spin and you'll see what I mean. School yourself, punk! **Aaron Lefkove**

their chops before attempting to engage a national audience. Tora! Tora! Torrance!, hailing from Minneapolis, fit into the above demographic as well as any other sub-mediocre band. Sounding like a young group that fanatically spun their At the Drive-In and Hot Water Music discs before eventually discovering the greater contributions of Fugazi, TITIT! play guitar-heavy punk rock inflicted with the heartlands' mundane penchant for emcore and its often-guaranteed erraticness. Frontman Nick Koenigs' vocals are bratty and whiny enough to grate on the listener and thus become as destructive as the group's attempt at meaningful instrumental segues. TITIT!'s greatest enemy appears to be a lack of focus, something that tends to breed a bedlam sounding inappropriate even amidst the chaotic demeanor of the punk genre. What else can you expect from a band whose press credentials boast that they were signed after their first handful of shows and whisked away into studio within months to record *Get Into It?* One should want to hear whispered rumors of a great young group before an album finds its way to their stereo. *Get Into It* offers up all the disappointment exemplified in removing the metaphor from this audio pre-ejaculation. **Jason Mueller**

Travoltas "Endless Summer" (Fast Music)- The Travoltas are the by-product of providing 1950's and '60's teen icons Annette Funicello and Frankie Avalon with a plaid skirt and a mohawk. These guys incorporate the harmony of the Beach Boys and the speed of the Ramones to conjure up a more sophisticated brand of pop-punk, not to mention the fact that Marky Ramone has showed his support by offering to produce them. While, the theme for most of the tracks seems to be women and touring (what else matters?). The second song "Liv Tyler" has singer, Perry, player-hating on all the movie stars that are privileged enough to play with the luscious-lipped Aerosmith offspring. Hailing from the world capitol of Red Light districts, Amsterdam, The Travoltas have crafted a sound that has potential to rob Pennywise of their title of the kings of surf punk. The added flavor of a Moog synthesizer and backing harmonies demonstrates that this a band that has the oldies station programmed into the stereo of their van. The difference between The Travoltas and every other pop-punk band is that these guys have reverence for old time rock and roll, the rest simply pay homage to The Ramones again and again. **Goon**

Unwritten Law "Music in High Places" (Earth Escapes)- I guess Dashboard Confessional's unplugged album didn't quench the masses' thirst for sappy wrist-slitting acoustic songs. It's just a matter of time until acoustic releases become a mandatory pre-requisite for a main stage slot on the Van's Warped Tour. The title of this CD refers to the fact that the songs were recorded in the mountainous terrain of Yellowstone National Park. Nine out of the eleven songs were recorded during a TV benefit for the Crow Indian Tribe. It seems that over the last few years most community and benefit based albums have been released for either the purpose of promoting animal rights or for taking a stand on ocean pollution, so let's give Unwritten Law a hand for taking their tired SoCal punk routine and pumping some life into it a la the geysers and mooses of Yellowstone. However, judging from the mellow sound of this CD you would never know that these guys were once a California punk band. For the hardcore Unwritten Law fans only, if there are any. **Goon**

Useless ID "No Vacation from the World" (Kung Fu)- You have

YIA "Stepping Stone V:1" (The Militia Group)- Anyone concerned with the exploitation and corporate raiding of the punk rock world by the man probably shouldn't ask to be on The Militia Group's mailing list any time soon. This compilation, supposedly a guide to "the best bands you have never heard," as if these Southern California music execs are a credible source for the best in underground music, proudly boasts "the Stepping Stone is just what it alludes to... a step to bigger and better things." I'm sure a lot of people in the punk community who believe in Do It Yourself ethics and community-based politics (e.g. Jello Biafra, Ian MacKaye, Steve Albini, etc.) probably wouldn't agree that leaving the indie community for the bottom-line obsessed territory of the corporate world is anything better. Actually, I'm sure some people would be downright insulted by that. The fact that an indie label actually includes a nod to A&R executives at these "bigger and better" labels should be an unwritten testimony to The Militia Group's credibility as an artistic tastemaker (e.g. bottom-line obsessed). Admittedly, some of the music isn't bad here— even though the disc sounds as if it was mastered underwater— but the whole idea of this is ridiculous. **Jim Jameson**

Yakuza "Way Of The Dead" (Century Media)- Starting with a very satisfying tribal-sounding intro, the first track dives into mid-tempo chugging hardcore with an almost emo vocal flair. It's pretty disappointing if you, like me, thought something named Yakuza would offer some intense, crushing and complex metal with a deep ethnic slant. Nevertheless, there are some interesting metallic crescendos at certain points and some interesting textured effects from this 4-piece-group-with-sax-player. But something very unfortunate happens when their lead vocalist gets going. It's not that his vocals aren't 'metal' enough or too 'emo' or what-have-you. It's just that there's too much going on with this act to muck around with vocals, especially when they're treble vocals, badly delivered. I don't know if Yakuza should go the Don Caballero route, but an answer lies in the swamp between the vocalist and the production. This record has avant-jazz Ken Vandermark on one track. **dup**

The Young Gods "Second Nature" (Ipecac)- Talk about a surprise in the pile— this is an album from '99 that these famed Swiss electronic-noise musicians must have never been domestically issued until now. When their first album came out in 1987, its mix of hard guitar loops and programming came as a much-praised sound and their first few albums are highlights in the electronic genre. Opening off with a heavy 303/acid bassline, "Lucidogen" dresses the room as the intensity of their early material is matched with a somewhat smoother approach, but the same dark flavor is still intact. This band made visceral, brooding music in the late '80's and early '90's when industrial was at its peak. As time progressed, they worked with various new textures like ambient but here they incredibly still retain the edge of their angrier material. Unlike a very political act like Mussolini Headkick or Consolidated, the Young Gods' music finds an unusually personal human intensity by virtue of live instruments, odd samples and their signature rasped vocals. The sheer density of their sound is inviting enough, but this is an excellent return to form for both this act and the electronic/industrial genre. I'm certainly prepared to extol Ipecac as one of the most adventurous and interesting labels out there today. **dup**



**"IT WAS ONE OF THE WORST MISTAKES I'VE EVER MADE,
THE DAY I OFFICIALLY GREW A MANGINA, THE DAY I
BOUGHT A..."**

mazda miata

I wake up in my crummy studio apartment and think for a moment, "I wonder what time it is... feels early. Maybe... 9:30? 10:00 am?" I roll over and look at the clock. It's 2:45 in the afternoon.

I walk downstairs, open my mail and scan through the junk. A Penny Saver. A birthday card for the guy who lived in my pad before me. An AT&T bill... and my monthly car loan statement from the Los Angeles Water and Power Community Credit Union. I open it up. I still owe them over \$9000.00. "Son of a bitch," I mumble to no one. \$9000.00 away from paying off one of the biggest mistakes of my life.

Buying a Mazda Miata, is akin to drunken, rubberless sex with a club junkie. Sounds like fun, seems like a good idea... until you wake up with herpes. Incurable and forever tainting. No way to avoid being reminded of them on a daily basis.

Driving around the streets and freeways of L.A., I'm always scanning the road for other Mazda Miatas. And whenever I see one, the same prayer goes through my head. "Please, please, please let it be a dude in the driver's seat." Nine times out of ten, it's a chick. "Damn it..." And that tenth time, when it IS a dude driving the internal combustion vulva, it is ALWAYS, 100% of the time, a total rim job of a human being. Frosted hair, tan in the can, well-groomed eyebrows... no doubt on his way to enjoy an apple martini somewhere. A real "sport." "Damn you, you fuck stain!" I yell across the lanes of the highway. Confusion is my only response. I pound on my steering wheel, perhaps part of me hoping to deploy the airbag and cause a massive pile up. Is it really possible that I'm the only heterosexual non-choad male who's gotten himself into this mess? Or, Fucking

A, am I a choad also? An unknowing choad? Crap. Does anyone know where I can buy an "I heart chocolate" bumper sticker?

My last car was a 1983 Toyota Corolla. It wouldn't start if it sat in the rain for longer than an hour. It required a jump start an average of once every two weeks. None of the doors worked. I had to start the ignition with a screwdriver. It was stolen and stripped, so I put most of it back together with pieces I found at various junk yards. Whenever possible, I'd park on a decline so I could pop the clutch without anyone giving me a push. It went through belts faster than Anna Nicole Smith. I had to duct tape the muffler together in order to pass smog. Homeless people slept in it. It pissed oil. Everyday was a battle to get that Corolla started, but dude, I felt justified to own a pair when I drove that thing. No chick would know what to do with my old '83 Corolla.

I couldn't wait to get rid of that car. Now I drive a Miata.

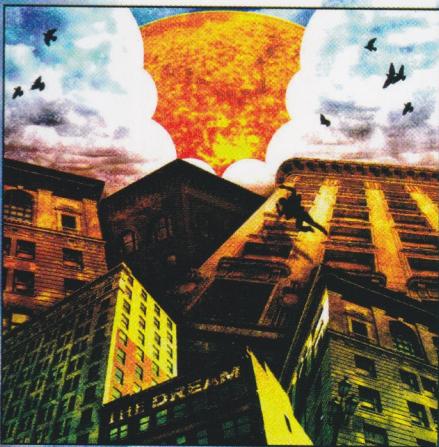
What the fuck was I thinking?! I mean, shit, I'm the first to admit that I enjoy a few gay things. I own a couple of Belle and Sebastian CDs, I watch Dr. Phil and the Other Half sometimes, I thought that "Believe" song by Cher was pretty good... but BUYING a Mazda Miata?! DUDE!!! Why don't I just drop the soap and start using the word "fabulous" on a regular basis? When I make my final payment, is the Water and Power Credit Union also going to request my now empty ball sack?

As I drop my mail onto the coffee table, I cruise into my bathroom to take a piss. I sit down. As I finish, I stand and tuck my dick and balls between my legs and view my makeshift mangina in the mirror. "Hmmm..." I think to myself. "Maybe I'll give this thing a Penthouse trim."



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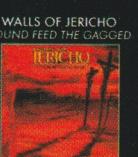
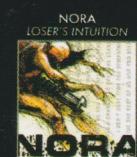
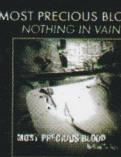
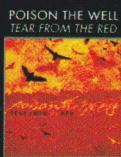
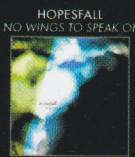
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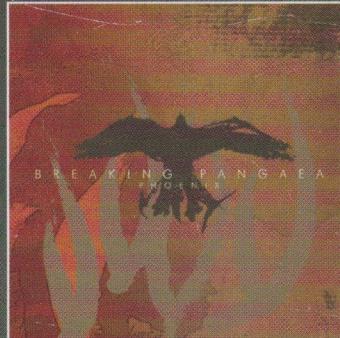
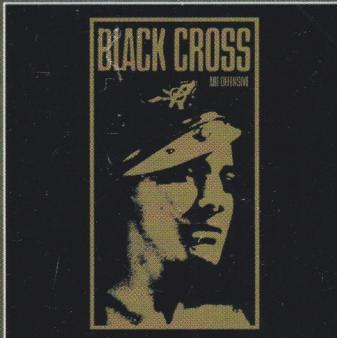


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